

LONDON SOCIETY.

JULY, 1886.

KATE'S DAY WITH THE OLD HORSE.

"YES, Kate, we are as nearly as possible 'stone broke,' as your brother would say. The time seems to have come, my girl, when 'honour may be deemed dishonour, loyalty be called a crime,' at any rate in Ireland; and as we can't make our tenants pay rent, we must go."

The speaker was a massive-looking old gentleman with clean-cut, weather-beaten features, and a heavy white moustache. He had drawn his chair away from the breakfast table, and was still knitting his brows over his morning letters.

Poor old Lowry, like his fathers before him, had lived out of doors amongst his own tenantry all his life, with a joke and a half-crown for any one who wanted them.

Almost all the harm he had ever done was to win a heart or two which he did not want, or drink a glass or two more than was good for him. For forty years he had paid rates and taxes, acted conscientiously as a magistrate, and filled several other onerous but unpaid offices for his Queen and such as are put in authority under her; he had drunk her health loyally every night since he first learnt to drink strong drink, and would have "knocked sparks out of" any one who had spoken disrespectfully of her before him; and now the property which his fathers had honestly earned was left at the mercy of a league of avowed rebels, and he himself was branded as an enemy of the people. Had he and such as he been left to defend themselves, they would long ago have put an end to these enemies of honest men and of the State, but their hands were tied. They were bidden to wait for help, but no help came. Lowry was still too loyal to murmur openly against the Government which had ruined him, but he had just realized that their name and their loyalty were almost the only things left to him and Kate, his daughter, who sat playing nervously with an empty envelope and gazing out blankly and sadly upon the

old park she loved until her deep blue eyes filled unconsciously with tears.

But Kate was not the girl to indulge in tears when a difficulty had to be met, and in ten minutes she had mastered her emotion and was walking with her father to the stables, gravely discussing affairs with the stalwart old man, more like one man with another than like a young girl with her father.

"So the horses are to go up next week, dad, are they? It is a bit of a wrench to say good-bye to you, Val," said the girl as she laid her hand lovingly on the neck of a great up-standing chestnut, "but you are good enough to find yourself a situation, my boy. Father, though, what about Joe? We could not let him go into a cab, and he is too old for anything better."

"True, Kate, and I can't bear to shoot the old fellow, and yet what are *we* to do with a pensioner now?"

"Shoot him! No, father, we'll keep the bullets for other billets. A loyal servant and friend like Joe has as much claim on you as your daughter has; and whilst we have bread and cheese we can find Joe in fodder. Poor old fellow, I believe he would rather eat his litter with us than old oats in a strange stable."

It was a pretty picture, let latter-day aesthetes deny it if they will—the tall, strong girl, natural and unaffected, not a bit angelic, but very womanly, caressing the old horse, who lowered his head to meet her caresses, and shoved his honest old nose against her cheek.

And Kate was right. It is a hard thing that a horse who has risked his neck a thousand times for his master, who has never known fear or spared himself in that master's service, should be thought only fit for a bullet when his limbs and wind begin to fail. We pension the half-hearted human servants, we destroy the whole-hearted beasts who have worn out their youth and strength prematurely in our employ.

"How are you going to keep Joe, if I let you try, Kate?"

"Well, father, I ought to be able to make a pound a month by needlework, Christmas cards, and so forth; there is a bit of land at the cottage, so that turned out on that in summer and not much worked in winter, Joe need not cost much to keep, and I'll groom him myself."

"And what would the London aunts say to that, Kate?" laughed the squire.

Kate put a hand trustingly on the old man's shoulder as she answered smiling, "The London aunts say a good many things, dad, which I don't agree with, and you only pretend to, you know. Aunt Dorothy prefers her carpets to sunshine, at least she keeps her rooms dark all day for fear the sun should spoil their colours."

"I thought it was her colour which the sun spoils, Kate?"

Kate laughed, and with a squeeze of her father's arm and a saucy nod, flitted off to see to some member of her animal kingdom.

Luckily for the Irish, they take trouble well, and though skinning is an unpleasant process, they soon get used to it.

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Three months after the events recorded in the preceding paragraphs Kate and her father were living at what had been their agent's cottage, a tiny house with stabling for one horse. The Lowrys' agent was now Colonel Lowry himself, and his daughter (the best and straightest lady rider in Gonaway) had laid aside her habit as a souvenir of happier days.

At the Hall a rich Londoner had replaced the old squire (as his tenant), and a London young lady inflicted agony on the mouths of such horses as she rode, and never disgraced her sex by an after-breakfast visit to the stables.

Instead of the laughter of that tom-boy Kate, highly finished performances on the piano frightened the blackbirds off the lawn, and instead of jokes and half-crowns from a poor but warm-hearted native, the peasantry now received pamphlets on market gardening and threepenny-pieces from an alien millionaire.

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"Molloy says they have just shot 'the Laurels' for the seventh time this year, and there's not a hen pheasant left on the estate."

"Never mind, father, it won't matter to us. Mr. Preece will have some more down from Leadenhall Market or some such place next year; and, after all, they pay our rent for us, and we couldn't live without them."

"Pay the rent," grumbled the squire; "I could have done that myself, if I'd sold all the game, and never given a head to man or woman on the place."

"Then why didn't you, dad?"

"Why didn't I, girl? Well then, it's just because I suppose I've always belonged to 'the stupid party,' thank God for it."

Poor old Lowry was a red-hot Tory, without any Liberal instincts whatever, a fact which sufficiently accounted for the mess he had made of his life. And yet, somehow, the men who dared still to touch their hats to this reprehensible old robber of the public lands, did so with a smile in their eyes more hearty than the smirk they gave to his successor, Mr. Preece.

Since the first day we met her, a change has come over Kate. The grey-blue eyes are just as beautiful, but there is less sparkle in them; the lips are just as sweet, sweeter it may be, but the dimple has gone. In the last few months she has seen more of the seamy and shabby side of life than she had even guessed at in the twenty sunny years which went before.

I don't think the squire has any suspicion of it, and Kate has

neither mother nor sister to tell it to, but her poor little heart has had its stoutness tried a good deal of late. When Kate was queen at the Hall, gallant George Vernon, sometime captain of Hussars and at present master of the hounds and Kate's very distant cousin, had remembered the tie of kinship to the bright young beauty quite as often as duty required. Now his visits were like angel's visits in number and, to the proud Kate, even less welcome.

George Vernon was no snob, but then Kate the hostess at the Hall, the reigning queen in the hunting-field, and Kate without a horse to her name, in a cottage and out of the world altogether, were very different persons, and George unconsciously showed that he felt the change. Though man is fickle, perhaps George would not have allowed his admiration for his cousin to cool so suddenly had there not been attractions elsewhere.

Miss Preece (the daughter of the new tenant at the Hall) would have passed as a pretty woman anywhere. If lemon-coloured locks, an abundant fringe, bright colour, and the full, tempting figure of a young Juno, make beauty, then Polly Preece was a belle. If reckless riding and a smart habit make a horse-woman, Polly Preece was a very Amazon.

True she had never had a fall; true her horses cost three hundred guineas apiece, and were clever enough to jump through hoops at a circus, even though they had ten stone of fair humanity hung on to their tortured mouths; and true, too, that though Polly laughed often (and showed in doing so as dazzling a set of teeth as ever disappointed a dentist), few people owed even a smile to any wit of hers.

But the Bruisers (as the men of the Gonaway hounds were called) voted her a right good sort, if only she would give them a little more time at their fences and not always pick the tenderest part of a man to jump upon.

George Vernon did the civil at first as Master. In a week's time he was her pilot, and in a month half-a-dozen of the Bruisers were sadly afraid that he would ere long be her husband, thereby robbing them of the greatest prize in the local market of matrimony and of the merriest bachelor in the hunt. As for George himself, he thought honestly enough that the Preece girl was "very good fun," but if he could have had her dollars without her he would have been a happy man. Unfortunately, circumstances, especially the bills connected with the maintenance of a crack pack of fox hounds, were beginning to impress upon him more and more the necessity for converting Miss Preece into a connecting link between himself and her papa's money bags.

This was, roughly, the state of affairs on Monday, November 2nd, 1885, the first regular meet of the Bruisers for the season.

It was a time-honoured custom that the first meet should be held at the Hall, and though the master of the house who had

entertained them so often was there no longer, still the house stood and the custom remained.

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"I suppose you would hardly care to go to the meet to-day, dad?" queried Kate at breakfast.

"Not go to the meet, girl, after keeping the old tryst so many years, why not?"

"Oh, I don't know, only I thought you might not."

"What, because another fellow provides the sherry and is master at the Hall? Of course I don't like it, but providing he does not give the men *Hamburgh* stuff, I'll go and be thankful to him for doing what I can no longer afford to do. Put on a leather petticoat, little woman, and we'll run with them since we can't ride."

I think the old man struck the match to light his pipe a shade more viciously than was necessary, but he never winced, though he was perhaps remembering another 2nd of November when the little woman was yet unborn, and he himself on the best horse in the country was as good a man "as ever holloed to a hound," and in one fair woman's eyes the best.

Suddenly he put down his pipe and called, "Kate."

"Yes, father."

"Come down again for a minute."

"All right, in half a second;" and almost as soon as she had promised Kate was in the room again.

"What is your will, sir?" said she with a little mocking courtesy.

"Why, child, I was thinking that you at any rate might ride to the meet. Your habit is packed away somewhere; Joe looked yesterday as fit as paint, and, as Tim expressed it, 'is brimful of consate.' I declare he has waxed fat and kicks, to the serious detriment of his old tumble-down box."

"No, father, if you don't ride, I shan't. If you run, so shall I."

"Do as you are bid, Kate, or rather, since you never do that, ride if it is only half-a-dozen fences, just to please your old father, and to show that young woman at the Hall the difference between riding and being carried, between hands and paws."

Those who loved Kate best would always have been the first to admit that she had just "the laste bit of the divvle in her, God bless her," and hence it was perhaps that her father's diplomatic suggestion as to the eclipse of her rival brought the colour to her cheek and the light to her eyes.

"Do you really want me to, father?"

"Really, really, Kate, and now let us go and have a look at Joe."

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I am ashamed to say how old Joe was. Like ladies, horses don't care to have their ages published on every house-top, and though they cannot lie for themselves on this important point, they have no difficulty in finding many to lie for them.

Joe was said to have been eight when the Lowrys bought him, and they had ridden the gallant brown for seven years. But eight is a queer age in a horse, as expansive and uncertain as the adjective "young" when applied to spinsters. At the lowest computation Joe was not less than fifteen, and a "vet." who wanted to buy him once pledged his professional credit that he was twenty-six at least. Be this as it may, when an hour later he walked out of his loose box, he looked the very type and *beau idéal* of a twelve-stone hunter. From the carriage of his lean game head and trimly-docked tail, from the cheery snort with which he welcomed the fresh air, from the muscle on his square and massive quarters, from his hard, clean legs and full, bold eye, you might have fancied he was a six-year-old. A veteran strapper who had followed the squire from the Hall to the cottage, had spent an hour in dressing the old horse, and the squire's own hands had put the finishing touches to his toilette. Proud and gay the old rascal looked before his mistress mounted, but when she was in the saddle he gave one wild kick from sheer exuberance of spirits and then trotted out of the yard, as old Tim expressed it, "for all the world as if he was tridding on eggs."

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"Ye gods! she is a dazzler! Quite takes my breath away," said a shiny-hatted, faultlessly-breeched stranger from Dublin to a young local Nimrod; "why, there are not half-a-dozen girls, even with the Meath, who have ventured out yet in Busvine's scarlet array, and here is a young lady in the wilds of Gonaway with a seat like a sack of potatoes and raiment more magnificent than Solomon in all his glory."

"Fits her well for all that, and suits her style, milk and roses and that sort of thing, you know," replied the local, himself rather a captive to the fair equestrian.

"Milk and roses! Milk and fiddlestick! Lemon and white I should describe her if she was in the setter class; but tell me, who is she, and has she any money?"

Needless, perhaps, to explain that poor Polly Preece was the subject of this irreverent banter, which in a measure perhaps she had deserved, for though a pretty woman in "the lady's pink" is a fair picture in a showy frame, she must not be hurt if she is a little stared at on her first appearance. And, indeed, Polly was not hurt. On the contrary, she was flattered and in high spirits. Her new jacket fitted her to perfection; her horse was well-mannered and easy to ride; she had drawn the attention of every

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one to her sweet self, and she felt for the moment that "blues" or fear had for her neither existence nor meaning.

A large group of late comers was still standing in the doorway and on the broad steps of the hall, chaffing each other or pledging their host in a last stirrup cup.

"What is that madcap daughter of mine about now?" exclaimed old Preece, as Polly broke from the throng and sent her horse along over the turf at a rattling gallop, followed by two or three of her admirers.

From the steps to the line of elms no fence was visible to the spectators, and yet before reaching the avenue, three of the horses rose at something, and the fourth and his rider seemed to be swallowed up.

"Good heavens! young Voyle is down in the Park fence," cried Preece; and sure enough the exquisite from Dublin shortly after emerged from the abyss, his hat crushed, his breeches smirched, and his temper somewhat soured by the loss of a good horse.

"Really, Mr. Preece, you must curb that young lady's pluck; she will break her neck some day if you don't take care," suggested an elderly friend.

"Break her neck," growled old Preece; "it isn't pluck, it is folly; wait until she has had a fall; you'll see she will learn better."

Kate had been sitting a quiet spectator of this little episode, though the old horse had backed and fidgetted with impatient desire to join in the fun.

As Polly rode back from the fence she caught sight of Kate, and with that sweetness which women show to rivals they detest, wreathed her face in smiles and laid a caressing hand on Joe's mane.

"Oh, Kate, how glad I am to see you out! I wish, dear, you had let me know that you meant to come. You might have ridden Dennis or my bay. I am afraid your dear old horse is almost past work now!"

"Doesn't look like it, does he, Miss Preece?" retorted Kate, as Joe champed his bit and pawed the velvet turf. Polly hated to be called Miss Preece by Kate, and would fain have passed for her bosom friend; but Kate unfortunately chose her own friends for herself, and Polly was not of them.

"Cousin Kate is a rare believer in the old horse," remarked George Vernon as he joined the two girls.

"Yes," assented Polly, "your cousin is a very antiquary; she likes everything that is old, and only what is old. She has even spoken slightly of this miracle of Mr. Busvine's. From politics to petticoats, Miss Lowry is a Tory, like her father!"

"I admit all you say, Miss Preece, and glory in it. I do prefer old habits, sartorial and otherwise, to any others."

There was a deepening in the blue of Kate's eyes as this word-

play went on, which looked as if she was more than half in earnest.

"Well, I don't agree with you, and for the sake of example I will back my young chestnut against your veteran in the field to-day," quoth Polly.

"Oh, come, Miss Preece, that's hardly fair," broke in George; "six against twenty-six, isn't it, Kate?"

"It may be, Cousin George, but the old horse can quite take care of himself, thank you. Yes, I'll match my old one against your chestnut, owners up; who is to be judge?"

"Would you mind, Captain Vernon?" pleaded Polly.

"No, certainly. What are the stakes?"

"Oh, say a pair of gloves; I am too much of a pauper to make the bet in dozens," replied Kate, and so the bet was made.

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The morning was a bright one, with a touch of hoar frost on the grass, which none but the early risers saw.

At 11.15 the rime had all gone, and the air was as "balmy as May," the sun shone brightly and men's spirits were as brilliant as the weather.

But the first draw was a long one, and a blank. The second was like it, and again no noisy note replied to what Captain Pennell Elmhirst calls "the huntsman's tuneful pleading."

Faces began to lengthen. A blank at Tod Hall had never been heard of in the memory of man. The gentlemen in velvet who had taken a somewhat prominent part in the morning's proceedings had disappeared by noon, and men spoke disparagingly of the race which some sportsmen aver is a compound of policeman and poacher.

It was easy by two o'clock to tell the men who rode horses from those who only "talked horse."

The "customers" were all looking grim and silent; the men of the road were brightly conversational and sat in groups discussing their cigars and whisky flasks at every point from which they could not possibly see, should the hounds slip quietly and suddenly away.

The little group near the corner of the covert had grown weary of waiting. The glow which follows a sharp trot to covert on your favourite hack, and the consumption of "just one glass" of orange brandy, had worn off, and the damp chill of a November afternoon had begun to pierce through the stoutest of pinks and to chill the gayest of hearts.

The horses had fretted themselves into a white lather with impatience, or stood with drooping heads and staring coats, mute witnesses to the chill which had come with afternoon and hope deferred. Everything suggested that fox-hunting was an over-rated amusement.

Little by little the hounds had drawn away from the Hall and its overstocked coverts, until now, at 2 p.m., they were thrown into a small outlying wood, where pheasants were never reared and rarely shot.

At last there was a doubtful whimper; then a "hard-looking" man in mufti (a local horse dealer) stood up in his stirrups and held his hat high above his head. A dozen keen pair of eyes saw the signal, and though no foolish halloo imperilled their chance of a run, the light and colour came back into the men's faces, and they forgot in a moment the miseries of the morning as they marked the lithe red form of reynard steal out of covert, and with a whisk of his grey-tagged brush, make off leisurely, with his head set straight for the stiffest line in the county.

By this time the first doubtful whimper had been caught up and repeated in fuller and more certain tones, and there was little need of the horn to call loiterers from covert.

One after another the beauties tumbled out in hot haste, hackles up. For one moment each seemed to dwell as he cleared the brakes, and then with a rush they gathered to where old Monitor had the line under the lee of a grey stone wall, along which the whole pack glanced, swift and close packed as wild fowl on the wing, while the keen November air thrilled with the maddest, merriest music that ever made a sportsman's blood tingle in his veins.

The wild freshness of the morning, with its bright sunshine, had given place to frost, and men settled grimly down to their work with the conviction that with such a burning scent and an afternoon fox few would live with hounds to the finish.

The field was never a large one from the start. None but those who got away at once had a chance of seeing the run, for the first mile was ridden at racing pace over a lovely grass country, with nothing to stop hounds or men save low stone walls, over which they slipped without a rattle like the phantoms of a dream. Amongst those still with hounds at the end of the first mile were the two ladies and the master. Polly's red jacket had followed George Vernon as the needle follows the magnet—a little too closely, perhaps, for the comfort of the magnet. Kate had been in trouble on the right, her old horse, fresh and mad with excitement and out of temper with the long restraint of the morning, had got his ears laid flat back and the bit in his teeth.

For the moment the temperate habits of past years were forgotten, and poor Kate, with arms aching and powerless, felt herself flashing over stout stone walls at a pace which would have been dangerous over sheep-hurdles.

Polly's chestnut, on the contrary, was behaving in a manner which would have done credit to the best horse in Galway or with the Heythrop, steadying himself at every wall and popping over with the least possible exertion to himself or risk to his rider.

And now five of the "pursuers" were in one field, grass beneath their feet and a fair stone wall without a gap in it in front.

All except Polly probably noticed the rushes which grew in tiny bunches beneath the wall, and guessed from them and from the sudden dip of the land that the take-off would be a boggy one.

In vain Kate tried to get a pull at her horse. On the left, Vernon and Polly had got over with a scramble. One man was down, and a second felt that the roan was worth another fifty at least for the way he kicked himself clear of the dirt.

With a rush which would have landed him well on the other side of twenty feet of water, the brown went at the highest place he could find in the wall. Kate knew what must come, but hardened her heart and faced it. As the old horse tried to rise, he stuck in the heavy bog. There was a crash; for a moment everything spun round, and Kate was down with a stunning fall.

Had any one seen her, of course even the run of the season would have been given up to render her assistance, but her only companions in this particular field had the lead of her, and the side walls hid her from other people's view, besides which Kate Lowry was one who had long since established her right to look after herself in the hunting-field.

For a minute or two the slim girl's figure lay prone and motionless on the damp turf, while her horse stood by hanging his wise old head regretfully over the ruin he had made. Then the girl raised herself on her elbow, pushed the fair hair out of her eyes, and sitting up, looked into the old horse's wistful face with a half smile.

"You old fool, Joe!" she said; "you ought to have known better at your time of life."

Rising to her feet, she leaned her head for a moment on her saddle, pressing her hand to her side as if in pain, and then backing her horse so that he stood close alongside the wall, she climbed slowly and with difficulty back into the saddle.

"I wonder how long we lay under that wall, Joe?" soliloquized Kate, as she walked him through a gap in the next wall; "and I wonder, too, where the hounds are, and if I must give it up and let that Preece girl beat me?"

Listening intently, she sat for a moment by the roadside, the old horse's ears pricked keenly forward. At last she thought she heard hounds running, it seemed, to her right. Without a moment's hesitation she turned Joe round, and, sobered by his fall, that mud-besmeared veteran popped over the wall as cleverly as a cat, only to be reined up short as he lit, for there, streaming over another wall, were the whole pack, going as keenly and as fiercely now as in the first three fields. With them were only two horsemen, the master and the man in mufti.

As the three joined forces, George noticed for the first time his cousin's white face and muddy garments.

"Why, Kate, where have you been? Not hurt, I hope?" and though the words were curt and simple, the expression in his face was less careless than it might have been.

"No, thanks; more mud than bruises, I think. Where is Miss Preece?"

"Rolled off in the only piece of plough in the county, and seems to have taken root there," laughed the ungallant M.F.H.

"No damage done, I hope?" said Kate.

"Hurt? No. Her clever chestnut put his feet into a furrow and stumbled, *la belle* Polly rolled off, and though we put her up again, she seemed to have had enough, especially as she believed that you had given up the chase some time since."

"Oh, indeed," laughed Kate a little grimly. "You see hers was her *first* fall; it makes a difference."

And now the conversation dropped. Each of those three riders had his or her hands full for the time. The fox in front of them was indeed a stiff-necked one. Save for the one turn which had given Kate a second chance he had gone straight as the crow flies since the find. Save for a check of a short five minutes, the hounds had run almost as if they were coursing him, and it was already a full half-hour since the find, and the spire of Kempford church was now visible on the right. At the back of Kempford village was a well-known drain, in which more than one stout fox had found safety. For this reynard seemed to be making, and to judge of the frequency with which each of the three horses rattled their walls as they skimmed over them, his pursuers were hardly likely to get there even if he was.

But between the Kempford drain and him there ran the deep and broad stream of the Cheln, unfordable, and rarely, if ever, crossed (save by a bridge) in the annals of fox-hunting. As the three neared the river, they were (thanks to a lucky turn) in the same field with the hounds.

"By Jove, there he is," cried the "dealer," breaking silence for the first time, and there, sure enough, dragging his gallant but draggled person up the bank opposite was poor "pug," in full view of the pack. No otter hounds ever took water more savagely than did old Monitor and his comrades, almost whining with impatience to close with their gallant foe.

"Kate, for God's sake don't try it," cried Vernon.

It was too late; the old horse had already been driven in, and the first woman who ever swam a horse across the Cheln was already battling with the stream, her lips hard set, her grey-blue eyes full of fire, and her whole face recalling vividly for the moment, in spite of its natural softness, the stern outlines of those ancestors whose war-worn profiles adorned the long galleries of the Hall.

It was a difficult swim, but old Joe's limbs were borne up bravely by the brave heart within, and it was not till long after the drip-

ping habit had been dried that it occurred to Kate that, like Lord Cardigan, she had forgotten that she could not swim.

The M.F.H. and his cousin were now the only two left with the hounds, and in front of them rose perhaps the worst fence in the Gonaway country, a stiff stone wall, the stones all firmly morticed, and on the top a row of rough-edged slabs set on end like the teeth of a saw. Under the take-off side ran a deep little stream, nowhere less than six feet wide, and even at that the banks were undermined and unsafe.

The cousins were alongside in the field which this mantrap bounded. Every atom of colour had left her cheeks now, and her lips were white with pain. Had George's whole heart and mind not been in the chase, he must have seen, and insisted on her returning home. As it was, he only said, "They've killed him, Kate; I must have it and save a bit of the best fox I ever hunted." And if hounds' tongues could be believed, they had indeed at last pulled the gallant old fox down, though the rugged piece of masonry before alluded to hid the pack from view.

"Is there no other way, George?"

"No, don't you follow me; go back by the lane and I'll bring you the brush if I can save it."

So saying, the master turned his horse and set himself at the place where the wall looked lowest. Kate had been bred in a hunting country, but, truth to tell, her heart hung on that leap.

"One thrust to his hat and two to the sides of his brown," and then he shot to the front, seat steady and hands well down, Right bravely the horse rose at the leap, but the bank broke as he rose, his knees caught the coping stone with a jarring thud, and man and horse lay stunned on the other side.

To the wild cry of "George, George!" no answer came back, and then it was for the first time that poor Kate knew how irretrievably her heart had been lost to her dashing cousin.

To gallop to the gate was useless, though she essayed it. The gate was six barred and locked, moreover the wall and its guarding stream still ran on beyond the gate. Kate had lost her head and her heart, but not her pluck.

"Just one more try, Joe," she whispered, and with a rush that seemed born of the last energies of a gallant heart the brave old horse faced and cleared the coping stone. Many fresh horses might have cleared that wall; but they talk of that leap still in Gonaway. Nearly five feet of hard stone and a biggish brook in front was no small feat, they say, for a tired horse, even with bonny Kate Lowry on his back.

Under the wall lay the grey stone dead, and under him George Vernon, his white face looking up at the sky now darkly bright with the frost of a November evening.

How Kate got her cousin from under his horse and watched the

colour creep back to his bronzed cheek, no one knows, for she kept these things in her own sweet heart, but it was late in the evening that a party sent out to search met an old woman leading along a donkey cart, on which lay poor Vernon, his leg and collar bone broken, while beside him sat a lady, her face white with pain, which her colour alone betrayed, and after them came a yokel leading old Joe, and followed by the best pack in Ireland.

The day had one more event in store for the villagers of Kempford. Arrived at the inn, Kate Lowry did what no Lowry had ever been known to do before—she fainted. On recovering, she shamefacedly exclaimed, "I think I must have broken something when I fell at the beginning of the run, and it has hurt me rather ever since."

She had broken something. No more nor less than three ribs; but if she had refused a humble prayer made to her three weeks later she would have broken something more important—"the heart" of the M.F.H. for Gonaway, who to this day may be heard to declare "that there is no pluck like a woman's, and I ought to know, for I married the pluckiest girl in old Ireland."

"THE BEGGAR'S OPERA."

HAS "The Beggar's Opera" at length really had its day? It seems like it, when the critics begin to be bored by the quaintness of its music and the "unredeemed vulgarity" of the book; more than all when the second operatic tenor* of the day avows himself utterly ignorant of Macheath's songs. There was a time when every gutter urchin could have given him a lesson. Never was an important work so lightly undertaken as this—on which Gay's reputation mainly rests. It was begun in jest, nursed into existence, a sort of adopted child of half a dozen great men in the world of letters, and then, after one of the most brilliant first-night battles ever fought across the footlights between author and audience, it won its way to a success which was quite unprecedented in the history of the English stage. John Gay, albeit of good family, was placed apprentice with a London silk mercer, but this calling proved little to his taste, and when he was a few years past twenty he managed to obtain the appointment of private secretary to the Duchess of Monmouth. In her service he found time to write his poem on "Rural Sports," which, dedicated to Pope, gained him a friendship only to end with his death, and an introduction to some of the best literary society of the day. Gay seems to have had the knack of making people love him, he was, as Thackeray puts it, "so kind, so gentle, so jocular, so delightfully brisk at times, so dismally woebegone at others, such a natural good creature. The great Swift was gentle and sportive with him as the enormous Brobdingnag maids of honour were with Gulliver. He could frisk and fondle around Pope, and sport and caper without offending the most thin-skinned of poets and of men." For twenty years Gay basked in the sunshine of his great friends, publishing something now and then; in office awhile as secretary to the Court of Hanover, then thrown out by the death of the Queen—making his way through life much as he made shorter trips, by his art of "patching up a journey between stage coaches and friends' coaches." Secretary Craggs gave him some South Sea Stock, and he imagined himself worth a fortune. But Gay's wealth slipped through his fingers while he was making up his mind how to secure it, and he nearly broke down under the calamity. His friends nursed him back into life and health, and

* This was written before the lamented death of Mr. Joseph Maas.

a year or two later he wrote his "Fables," which Hazlitt considered "a work of great merit, both as to the invention implied and as to the elegance and facility of the execution." It was intended for the benefit of the young Duke of Cumberland, the "butcher of Culloden;" but it does not seem to have profited teacher any more than pupil.

Next year the Prince and Princess became King and Queen; and Gay's mountain of hope brought forth the veriest mouse of court favour. He was offered the post of gentleman usher to the young Princess Louisa, and, bitterly annoyed, sent word that he was "too old for it." While he was smarting under the insult—just in the mood, in fact, for a fierce attack upon the court whose favour he had so assiduously wooed, Swift, so the story goes, remarked to him one day, "What an odd, pretty sort of thing a Newgate pastoral might make." Gay set to work, not upon a pastoral, but upon a comedy, finding in it, as it proved, an excellent method of avenging the slights which his sometime patrons had put upon him. Swift did not think very highly of this newer project, but, as the work progressed, and was submitted, now to him, and now to Pope, the pair gave Gay a correction or a word or two of advice. Pope adds, however, to this statement, that "the work was wholly of his (Gay's) own writing." On the other hand it is stated that several of the songs were contributions. Lord Chesterfield, for instance, is credited with "The Modes of the Town," Sir Charles Williams with "Virgins are like the fair flower," Swift with "When you censure the Age," and Mr. Fortescue, then Master of the Rolls, with "Gamesters and Lawyers are jugglers alike." All of these songs are omitted from the modern editions, while Mr. Sims Reeves, the most famous Macheath of recent times, is wont to introduce, from "School for Scandal," "Here's to the maiden of bashful sixteen." Arbuthnot, Swift, and Pope were all very doubtful as to the chance the piece had of succeeding. Colley Cibber, then lessee of Drury Lane, declined to touch it. Congreve was of opinion that "it would either take greatly, or be damned confoundedly," and later, Gay's warm patron, the Duke of Queensberry, expressed a similar opinion. "This is a very odd thing, Gay," he said on the night of the first performance, "it is either a very good thing or a very bad thing." Rich, of Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, had more courage than his brother managers. He promptly accepted the piece—and made a fortune by it. At his theatre, on January 29th, 1728, the opera was produced, music having been furnished by Dr. Pepusch, a most excellent musician, then director of the orchestra at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre. He married Francesca Margherita de l'Epine, the first Italian singer of any note who came to this country. She was so swarthy and ill-favoured that her husband used to call her "Hecate," a name to which she answered with perfect good humour. She

brought him £10,000. Of the "Beggar's Opera" Pepusch actually wrote nothing but the overture. The rest of the music is simply a selection—but an admirable selection—from the whole range of British ballads. The doctor went as far back in his search as Ferrabosco and Rizzio, and he annexed without hesitation from contemporary composers. Handel, for instance, was laid under contribution, and the Robbers' chorus :

"Let us take to the road.
Hark, I hear the sound of coaches,"

is the march from his "Rinaldo." In Mr. Ephraim Hardcastle's "Somerset House Gazette" there is recorded an amusing conversation in which Handel takes a leading part. Perhaps it is imaginary, but if it be, the great composer's peculiarities are hit off with wonderful skill. One of the persons represented is Pepusch, who, replying to some strong remarks directed by Handel against his persecutors in past years, says, "I hope, sir, you do not include me amongst those who did injustice to your talents." "Nod at all, nod at all, God forbid," was the reply; "I am a great admirer of the airs of 'The Beggar's Opera,' and every professional gentleman must do his best for to live." The tunes which Dr. Pepusch so skilfully arranged numbered sixty-nine. Doubtless Gay, who had acquired an "elegant proficiency" on the flute, was able to give him some assistance in his work. Several of the performers selected for the production of the opera had been previously of no repute. Most notable of these was Lavinia Fenton, whose name will for ever be associated with Polly Peachum, and whose portrait, painted by Hogarth, still exists to keep his fame and hers alive. Her mother was the widow of a naval lieutenant, who, marrying a second husband named Fenton, a coffee-house keeper, bestowed his name upon her little daughter. Lavinia was a pretty plaything for her parents' customers, and one of them, a comedian of the "old house," finding that the child had a sweet voice, taught her snatches of then popular songs. Fenton and his wife were wise enough, as the little one grew older, to obtain for her the very best masters they could, and at eighteen she made her first appearance, at the Haymarket Theatre, as Monina, in "The Orphan." Subsequently she played Cherry in the "Beaux' Stratagem," and Rich, seeing promise in her performance, offered her an engagement at his own theatre. Fifteen shillings a week was the salary he named, and for this magnificent sum he was able to secure her services. The Lucy Lockit was Mrs. Eggleton, wife of a young actor known as Baron Eggleton. Mr. Quin, who, according to Tom Davis, "had a happy ear for music, and was famous for singing with ease common ballads or catches," was selected for Captain Macheath, but he conceived the strongest distaste for the part, and hearing a young actor named Walker singing snatches of his songs behind the scenes one day, he

eagerly impressed upon the management that they had here a far better Macheath than himself, and gained his point.

It is worth noticing that two years later Quin played Macheath for his benefit, and netted £206 9s. 6d. The highest receipts for an ordinary performance were £198 17s. 6d., on the forty-third night. The original Peachum was Hipplesley, an excellent comedian—much given to gag, by the way—whose impersonations were largely aided by a distortion of his face, caused by an accidental burn in his youth. When Hipplesley's son contemplated going on the stage, Quin is said to have remarked that if the young gentleman was absolutely to make his appearance in public it was high time to *burn* him. Hipplesley began life in a very humble way—as candle-snuffer in the theatre; but eventually, on the death of Penktheman, succeeded to all that actor's parts, and became a great favourite with the public. Jack Hall, the Lockit, was originally a dancing master. Having made a fortune in that calling, he lost it in the management of Smock Alley, Dublin, and then took to the stage. The other characters were cast as follows:—Fileh, Mr. Clark; Jemmy Twitcher, Mr. Bullock; Robin of Bagshot, Mr. Lacy; Mat of the Mint, Mr. Spiller; Ben Budge, Mr. Morgan; Beggar, Mr. Chapman; Player, Mr. Milward; Mrs. Peachum, Mrs. Martin; Mrs. Coaxer, Mrs. Holiday; Mrs. Vixen, Mrs. Rice; Jenny Diver, Mrs. Clarke; Mrs. Slammerkin, Mrs. Morgan. Of course, Gay's friends mustered in force on the first night. His staunch supporters, the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, were present. Then there was the Duke of Argyll, Sir Robert Walpole, and a host of celebrities in all the "worlds." The performance began with a singular mishap. It had been decided to abandon the prevailing custom of playing a short piece before the overture; but the audience, objecting to this new departure, expressed its disapproval in somewhat noisy fashion. Hall, sent before the curtain to explain matters, lost his head, and caused roars of laughter by blurting out, "You know there is never any music at all in an opera." A less absurd incident has proved fatal; but the audience was good-natured enough to accept some calmer actor's explanation, and the piece began. The biting allusions to contemporary politicians, with which the opera teems, were quickly taken up by the audience. Walpole, in particular, must have spent an unpleasant evening, although he managed to turn the laugh very adroitly in one instance by loudly calling for the repetition of

"When you censure the age."

Still, the success of the piece hung in the balance for some time, and the audience seemed in doubt whether to stamp the "Beggar's Opera" with their approval or not. The Duke of Argyll, who prided himself on his faculty for taking the temperature of a "first night," saw, however, which way popular

"The Beggar's Opera."

feeling was tending, and cried encouragingly, "It will do, it will do! I see it in their eyes." It remained, however, for Polly to quite win their hearts. Her pathetic :

"Oh, ponder well! Be not severe;
So save a wretched wife;
For on the rope that hangs, my dear,
Depends poor Polly's life,"

at once settled the matter. Thenceforward the piece went like wildfire. It was played no fewer than sixty-three times—then an unprecedented run—and brought in large sums of money both to author and manager. Next season its revival was greeted in a manner which showed that it had lost none of its popularity; and it spread meanwhile to all the greater towns of the three kingdoms. At Bath and Bristol it reached its fiftieth night; and it was even played at Minorca. Society quite lost its head over the new piece. It was printed; scenes from it were engraved, and adorned screens, card-tables, and so forth; while the ladies even carried their favourite songs on their fans. Referring to Polly, Carey wrote:

"She has fired the town, has quite cut down
The opera of Rolli;
Go where you will the subject still
Is Polly, pretty Polly.
There's Madame Faustina—*Cutso*,
And likewise Madame Catzoni,
Likewise Signior Senesimo
And *tutti abandoni*."

Belloni
Polly had indeed "fired the town;" and some of the flames she inspired burned so furiously that she had to be escorted home from the theatre nightly by a sort of guard of honour of her friends lest she should be run away with. Her portrait was everywhere to be seen, collections were made of a thousand jokes she never uttered, and duels were fought about her. Six months later she was prevailed upon by the Duke of Beaufort to leave the stage, and she was eventually married to that nobleman. She seems to have been quite able to maintain her exalted position with dignity. Dr. Joseph Warton, who had been travelling companion to the duke, afterwards securing a comfortable position in the Church from his patron, often had the pleasure of being at table with her, when her conversation was much admired by "the first characters." "She was," says the doctor, "a very accomplished and agreeable companion; had much wit, strong, good sense, and a just taste in polite literature. Her person was agreeable and well made, though I think she could never be called a beauty." They tell a pretty story of a quarrel between Polly and her duke before she had secured him by marriage—which, by the way, was not until twenty-three years had elapsed—a quarrel so desperate that separation seemed

inevitable, when the cunning dame, hastily donning Polly's Quaker garments, approached her lord singing :

"Oh, what pain it is to part ;
Can I leave thee, can I leave thee?"

and straightway had him at her feet again. Miss Fenton's immediate successors in the part were Miss Warren, Miss Cantrill, that "jovial, ugly, witty, sensible actress," Kitty Clive, and later, Mrs. Crouch. "The Beggar's Opera" seems to have been quite a "short way to the peerage;" Miss Fenton's marriage was only the first of a series, for again

"Polly sang her requiem when
Fair Bolton turned to Thurlow,"

this Polly being Miss Mary Catherine Bolton, who married Lord Thurlow in 1813. Miss Kitty Stephens, who married the Earl of Essex, was a famous Polly too. Leigh Hunt considered that the pathos of her "Oh, ponder well," the mingled science and sentiment of "Cease your funning," and the bird-like triumph of her "He so pleased me," were like nothing else to be heard on the stage, and left all competition behind.

Success killed poor Tom Walker. His society was so eagerly courted by dissipated young men about town that he was scarcely ever sober, and had to resort to the most violent remedies to bring himself into a fit state to play. He died in great distress at Dublin. Tom was not a skilful musician, but an admirable actor. He had a good presence, an excellent voice, and a fine, manly countenance. He was good in tragedy as well as comedy, and his Bajazet, Hotspur, and Falconbridge are particularly well spoken of. Charles Hulet, who died in 1736, was held to excel Tom Walker. West Digges considered O'Keefe the best Macheath he ever saw. Incledon performed the part well; and Matthews followed him with one of those wonderful impersonations "in imitation." Kitty Stephens, who played Polly to Matthews, declared she could have sworn Incledon was once more on the stage with her. Kemble once contemplated appearing as Macheath, but better counsels prevailed.

Another great name in the history of the English stage is associated in a curious and interesting manner with "The Beggar's Opera." Madame Violante, a French dancing mistress, who catered in amusements for the fashionable people of Dublin, organized a little company of "Lilliputian actors," as she called them, to play Gay's piece. Her Macheath, a little mite of ten, became quite as great a favourite as any older impersonator of the dashing highwayman, and the theatre was crowded nightly. It was Peggy Woffington, who, years later, was to take all London by storm by her daring depiction of the gay, good-humoured,

dissipated rake, Sir Harry Wildair, the elegance and deportment of which seemed beyond the range of female accomplishments.

If fashionable society was mad with enthusiasm in Gay's behalf, he had yet a powerful enemy to reckon with. "The Beggar's Opera" was furiously assailed by the more rigid moralists of the time. They were led by Dr. Herring, Archbishop of Canterbury, who declared that the opera was in the highest degree injurious to public morality. It imparted to vice, he said, a sentimental colouring which would render it more attractive and perplex such of the ignorant as were disposed to virtue. Swift, of course, warmly defended the piece, and attacked Dr. Herring in his fiercest manner. One journalist made capital out of the scandal in this fashion: "Lord S. has hinted that the renewal of 'The Libertine' will be highly disagreeable to him. C. F— insists on it that the 'Gamester,' or 'Gamesters,' shall not be represented again. A princely personage, who has lately set out on his travels, has left positive orders that neither 'Duke, or no Duke,' nor 'The Irish Widow,' shall make their appearance any more, and several Scotch physicians have concurred to beg the entire dismission of the 'Mock Doctor' from the stage." Burke thought "The Beggar's Opera" had no merit. Johnson considered that its influence was overrated. Gibbon is credited with the observation that "The Beggar's Opera" may, perhaps, have increased the number of highwaymen, but that it had a beneficial effect in "refining that class of men, making them less ferocious, more polite, in fact, more like gentlemen;" upon which Mr. Courtenay said that Gay was the Orpheus of highwaymen. "The Beggar's Opera" found a warm defender in Hazlitt, who considered it "a masterpiece of wit and genius, not to say, morality." "It is a vulgar error," he adds, "to call this a vulgar play. The scenes, characters, and incidents are, in themselves, of the lowest and most disgusting kind; but by the sentiments and reflections that are put into the mouths of highwaymen, turnkeys, their mistresses, wives or daughters, the author has converted this motley group into a set of fine gentlemen and ladies, satirists and philosophers. He has with great felicity brought out the good qualities and interesting emotions inseparable from the lowest conditions, and with the same penetrating glance has detected the disguises which rank and circumstance lend to exalted vice." "The exclamation," says Hazlitt again, "of Mrs. Peachum, when her daughter marries Macheath, 'Hussy, hussy, you will be as much ill-used and as much neglected as if you had married a lord!' is worth all Mrs. Hannah More's laboured invective on the manners of high life."

Hogarth lent the aid of his powerful pencil to the moral party. In his picture, "The Beggar's Opera Burlesqued," a performance of the piece is in progress on a high platform; but the players are adorned with the heads of brutes—Polly with a cat's, Lucy with a sow's, Macheath with that of an ass, Lockit with an ox's;

while Mr. and Mrs. Peachum figure respectively as a dog and as an owl. About the stage stand many persons of quality, some of whom are paying homage to Polly on their knees, while a butcher vies with them in adoration. Beneath the stage lie Apollo and one of the muses, fast asleep, while the artist has not hesitated to use the most disgusting expedients to accentuate his contempt. In another part of the picture an Italian opera is apparently being rehearsed, and several noblemen are leading the chief singer on the stage. Harmony, flying in the air, is eagerly forsaking the English for the Italian entertainment. In front of the former musicians are playing upon the jew's-harp, the salt-box, the bladder and string, the pipes and other instruments, while scattered about the picture are a gibbet, a tavern-sign, bearing the insignia of the garter and its motto, "*Honi soit qui mal y pense.*" The verse below reads:

"Britons attend; view this harmonious stage,
And listen to these notes which charm the age.
Thus shall your tastes in sound and sense be shown,
And Beggars' Operas ever be your own."

Hogarth drew a second picture of "*The Beggar's Opera*," a group from the scene in which the 53rd, 54th and 55th airs occurred. It is valuable on account of the portraits it contains, and because it has the only known representation of the interior of Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre. The portraits are those of Miss Fenton, Walker, Hare, Hippley, Clarke, and Mrs. Egleton on the stage, and in the audience the Duke of Bolton, Major Pounceford, Sir Robert Fagg, Rich, the manager, Mr. Cock, the auctioneer, Mr. Gay, Lady Jane Cook, Anthony Henley, Esq., Lord Gage, Sir Conyers D'Arcy and Mr. Thomas Robinson. Hogarth finished several large paintings of this group. Ireland, in his notes to Hogarth, warmly supports the views set forth in "*The Beggar's Opera Burlesqued.*" He records it to the honour of Sir John Fielding that he once attempted to prevent "*The Beggar's Opera*" being performed; but the attempt failed. "Since that time," says Ireland, "it has been so completely disfigured by Mr. Charles Bannister being disguised in the character of Polly, and Macheath personated by Mrs. Cargill, &c., &c., that no persons who had the least pretensions to taste would be seen at the dramatic masquerade." Ireland states the case against "*The Beggar's Opera*" in very solemn form, making quite a brave array of shocking examples—young men caught in the act of midnight robbery with copies of the dreadful book in their pockets, and so forth. It was said, indeed, that thieves found Macheath's songs as soul-inspiring as the "*Trumpet's martial sound*" is to Mr. Gilbert's policemen. They went to the playhouse to raise their courage for "*business*," by witnessing the gallant captive's bravado; and "*The Beggar's Opera*" was described by some one

as the "Thief's creed and common prayer-book, by which he fortified himself in the most atrocious wickedness from the impunity of his great exemplar Macheath." But on the other hand, Ireland appreciated as keenly as any one the attack on Italian opera, the prevailing fashionable entertainment of the day. He applauds Gay for opposing to "the soft sonnetteering stanzas of Italy the nervous ballads of old England," and proceeds in punning fashion: "He brought into the field the force of three kingdoms. . . . 'Britons, strike home,' was the word; 'Chevy Chase' led the van, was followed by 'A soldier and a sailor,' singing 'All joy to great Cesar,' and chorussed by 'Shenkin of a noble race,' when 'An old woman clothed in gray,' with 'A bonny broom,' swept the whole buzzing of caterpillars 'Over the hills and far away.' Goldoni's opera, 'I vaggiatori ridicolo tornato in Italia' (the ridiculous traveller returned to Italy), was in some measure realized."

An Italian is said to have summed up a vehement attack on Gay in these words: "Sare, this simple signor did try to pelt my countrymen out of England with lumps of pudding." There is no attempt at burlesquing the style of Italian music, but at the outset Italian opera is attacked. Says the Beggar, the presumed author of the piece, to the Player, in the prologue, which is now usually omitted, but which gives the keynote to the whole: "I have introduced the *similes* that are in all your celebrated operas—the swallow, the moth, the bee, the ship, the flower, &c. Besides, I have a prison scene which the ladies always reckon charming, pathetic. As to the parts, I have shown such a charming impartiality to our two ladies that it is impossible for either of them to take offence. I hope I may be forgiven that I have not made an opera throughout unnatural, like those in vogue, for I have no recitative." The "two ladies" is obviously an allusion to Faustina and Cuzzoni. Cuzzoni first appeared in England in Handel's "Otto," and so delighted the great composer that he exerted all his ingenuity to provide her with music which should enable her to make all possible "points." Never was man subjected to such caprice and insolence. Once, at a rehearsal, she so enraged him by refusing to sing "Falsa imagina" that, crying "I always knew you were a very devil; I shall let you know I am Beelzebub, the prince of devils," he bore her to the window and threatened to fling her out if she did not obey him. For the time he was master, but when Faustina was discovered he hailed the opportunity of transferring his allegiance to a less capricious queen of song. In her behalf he put forth all the powers which had been so ill-appreciated by Cuzzoni, and the two vocalists became bitter rivals. Society was divided into two parties, and disgraceful scenes ensued. Faustina was by no means the worse vocalist, while she was as winsome and pretty as Cuzzoni was ill-favoured and disagreeable. At length, by a pious

fraud, the managers got rid of Cuzzoni. They tricked her into resigning her position, but not before the scandal had culminated in a hand-to-hand fight between the two. Colley Cibber, in his "Dramatic Works," records the production of "'The Contretemps; or, The Rival Queens,' a small farce, as it has lately been acted with much applause at H—d—r's (Heidegger's) Private Theatre near the H—m— (Haymarket). F—s—a (Faustina), a Queen of Bologna, and C—z—ni (Cuzzoni), Princess of Modena, after having exchanged high words, seize each other by the hair in spite of the interference of Heidegger and Senesimo, and then they go off, Cuzzoni pursuing Faustina, who runs away." Handel has a part consisting of three lines, in which he advises that they be left to fight it out, inasmuch as the only way to calm their fury is to let them satisfy it.

The Beggar and the Player have another fling at Italian opera. The former announces his intention of hanging Macheath, and of either hanging or transporting all the rest of the personages. "Aye," says he, "this would be very right providing your piece were a tragedy, but being an opera it must end happily." "Your objection," replies the Beggar, "is very right; but the difficulty is easily removed, for in these kind of dramas 'tis no matter how absurdly things are brought about." It is worth noticing here that the head and front of Gay's offending with Dr. Herring was that he let his highwayman go unpunished, which was surely taking a joke in very sober earnest.

Of course a whole host of imitators followed Gay, and "Ballad operas" were the only wear for long enough. Still, it may be said that "The Beggar's Opera," being the first of its kind, remained also the best. In the catalogue of Watts, who published the handbooks, occur "The Village Opera," "The Lover's Opera," "The Harlequin's Opera," and "The Quaker's Opera," all with the music prefixed to each song. Gay himself wrote a sequel to "The Beggar's Opera," called "Polly," which, like most continuations, was very inferior to the original work. The authorities did a kind thing, however. They prohibited its performance, and at once gave a fictitious value to the published copies. Had it been performed it would probably have met with no success; indeed, the elder Colman did venture to produce it at the Haymarket years after Gay's death, but neither on this occasion nor on two subsequent revivals did it meet with any favour. In "Polly" Macheath is transported to the West Indies and becomes the chief of a band of pirates. Polly follows in search of him, and complications enough for half a dozen modern "farceical comedies" ensue. In the event Macheath is put to death, and Polly, having been allowed to devote a "decent time to her sorrows," is married to an Indian prince, Cawwawhee.

In 1760 Goldsmith pays an unwilling tribute to the continued popularity of "The Beggar's Opera." "What," he writes to the

Public Ledger, "Polly and the Pickpocket to-night? Polly and the Pickpocket again! I want patience. I will hear no more." One more notable revival may be mentioned at the Olympic, under Madame Vestris's management, when the cast included: Peachum, Mr. W. Farren; Macheath, Mr. W. Harrison; Polly, Miss Rainforth; and Lucy, Madame Vestris. The costumes were accurately designed after the fashion of Gay's time. Previously it had been the custom to adopt the dress of the period, and at Covent Garden Madame Vestris had played Macheath in the frock coat then worn.

The success of "The Beggar's Opera" and, in book form, of "Polly" had secured Gay quite a handsome fortune, and the rest of his life seems to have been cast in very pleasant places. The Duke and Duchess of Queensberry took him into their home, and there once more, as Thackeray puts it, "he was lapped in cotton and had his plate of chicken and his saucer of cream, and frisked and barked and wheezed and grew fat, and so ended. He became very melancholy and lazy, sadly plethoric, and only occasionally diverting in his latter days. But everybody loved him and the remembrance of his little tricks; and the raging old Dean of St. Patrick's, chafing in his banishment, was afraid to open the letter which Pope wrote him announcing the sad news of the death of Gay."

Years afterwards the opposition to "The Beggar's Opera" was revived, when the application already referred to was made, at Sir John Fielding's instigation, to the magistrates at Bow Street to request the managers of Drury Lane and Covent Garden not to exhibit this opera, deeming it productive of mischief to society. Garrick, for Drury Lane, consented; but Colman, then manager of Covent Garden, steadfastly refused, deeming his theatre "one of the very few houses in the neighbourhood that does not contribute to increase the number of thieves."

HENRY GEORGE HIBBERT.

OTHER PEOPLE'S FOOD.

TO persons with weak digestions and whose appetites consequently are seldom good and never keen, there is something peculiarly attractive in "other people's food." Invalids, of course, being what is called by the unsympathetic, "dainty and full of fancies," are still more likely to find in it a temporary stimulus to eating. It may be remarked *en passant*, however, that the sarcastic tone of superiority with which this sort of judgment is meted out to unfortunate sufferers not absolutely invalids by people in vigorous health, is much more reprehensible, far-reaching, and cruel than is generally supposed. The majority—if not a large one, certainly a majority—of the dwellers in great cities are afflicted more or less by the time they have reached a certain age with faulty digestions. They live, as it were, in a negative state of health. They cannot be said to be ill, but they are continually, as the phrase goes, "getting a 'little out of sorts,'" and to such of course no prescription can be so efficacious as change—change of air, of scene, of society, of diet; two days of such change usually effects a temporary restoration, and to this fact probably, by-the-way, has become due the universal habit, where it is possible, of a Saturday to Monday holiday.

The high-pressure rate at which we live, and the vast increase in the population of commercial centres, has of late years enforced the adoption of this habit as an absolutely necessary means of keeping the human machine in decent working order. With the positive invalid naturally a longer period of change is necessary for benefit to be wrought; whilst on the other hand, even those blessed with a robust constitution and consequent good health, are not insensible, if their avocations be sedentary, onerous and absorbing, to the extra fillip to work which a little change assuredly gives; yet it is these latter persons, and such as these in nine cases out of ten, who refuse to acknowledge anything beyond mere fanciful affectation or discontent in the craving displayed by their less fortunate friends for "other people's food," i.e. for change.

Nevertheless, whatever such individuals in their wisdom may assume to believe, "other people's food," where an appetite is not naturally keen or the digestion strong, nearly always appears to have a stimulating effect, and is therefore highly beneficial. For so infinitely complex is our organization, that the mind, directly affecting the stomach, gives a zest and a gusto to the plainest meal

partaken of in pleasant society, and at a strange table, which a precisely similar one at the home board entirely lacks. It is not essential that the food should be positively different; plain beef and mutton, if they only belong to "somebody else," and that "somebody else" is present while we partake of them, will be just as efficacious for the whetting of a jaded palate as if the change were worked out by the most recondite means of the culinary art. A fat, coarse-looking, untrimmed, underdone mutton chop has been known to present an enticing morsel, and to afford a satisfactory luncheon to one who had hardly been able to look at meat for weeks in his own house without its creating a feeling of nausea, much less to think of making a meal off it. The secret of this sudden revulsion of feeling was entirely due to the unexpectedness of finding a meal going on when he unpremeditatedly dropped in upon a friend who was hastily snatching a mouthful of food before starting on a journey. The hurry and bustle, the scramble almost, which was taking place at the table created an excitement and offered such a variety and contrast to the ordinary regularity and general humdrum round of meals at home, that an appetite started into existence. The mind was diverted from its customary channel of thought, there was no time for the usual apprehension of indigestion following the repast, and the consequence was, none did follow the acceptance of the invitation to "sit down and have some." So capricious and readily affected are all our functions one by another, when once the organism is a little out of sorts, that the slightest thing will turn the scale and make all the difference between enjoyment with benefit, and distress with injury.

Everybody knows how necessary for health it is to avoid living constantly on the same diet, and it is only an extension of this principle which is comprised in the advantage of partaking of other people's food. Even the ordinary bread-and-butter at a friend's house at five-o'clock tea oftentimes becomes invested with attractions entirely absent in our own; though, as has been known, the same baker and butterman supply both establishments. In fact, there is perhaps no viand in which the change is more palpable and palatable than in simple bread-and-butter. To some extent we may effect this change for ourselves, of course, by varying from time to time the sort of bread we use at our own table, and it is undoubtedly desirable and beneficial to do so. A too perpetual continuance of the same meal, system of baking, form of loaf, &c., wearies the palate, which by the same token is affected by the eye, in persons who are not possessed by overwhelming hunger, to whom alone we are referring. A substitute for the stimulus to eating developed by other people's food, may in a less degree be obtained by a judicious variation of our own. It is indeed the next best stimulant to be adopted, and generally speaking the more convenient, unless we have a very large circle of acquaintances,

and are consequently in the habit of having nearly as many meals away from as at home, and which with people in delicate health is not usually the case, or very desirable even if it were.

This question of stimulating enfeebled or jaded appetites by "other people's food" brings us naturally to another cognate with it, namely, how far it is desirable to stimulate them. That appetite which only comes with eating requires very delicate management, and though it may be beneficial and necessary to whet it judiciously, the process is very apt to lead us to overdo it, thereby inducing us to eat too much. A hungry man sits down and begins his meal eagerly; and as soon as his hunger is appeased feels that it is so, and naturally, if he be wise, he leaves off eating. But with an appetite that increases to a certain extent with every mouthful, it is more difficult for him really to know when he has had enough, and by consequence he very frequently eats more than his digestion can deal with comfortably, only finding out his mistake when it is too late. Roundly speaking, it may be generally assumed that those who take their places at table at the regular meal-times with indifference, feeling that they do not care to eat, are not in a perfect state of health, and it may be equally fairly assumed that nature does not therefore require the same amount of nourishment as if she were in perfect working order. She cannot point this fact out more plainly or by any more direct means; and we shall consequently be outraging her if we neglect her warning. Clearly, therefore, we must not over-stimulate her to exert herself. If we do we must inevitably suffer. The question therefore arises, how far and by what means it is advisable to carry the requisite stimulation, for without some she may not exert herself at all, and so evade that fair amount of nourishment which is needed to make good the waste of tissue perpetually going on in the human frame. It is not material to what cause this indifference to food may arise. It may be due to a merely temporary ailment, or it may be due to a chronically enfeebled digestion, or it may be due to the advance of years. But whatever be its cause, we must not force it beyond a very limited point, if we would not make matters worse. Allowing for the variations of constitutions it may be set down as a broad truth, that with the advance of years the human organism requires less and less strong nourishment; nay, it resists as long as it can any attempt to overtax its powers or demands. Shakespeare, whose knowledge was universal, asks, "Does not the appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth he cannot endure in his age," and the poet might have gone on to say, nor can he eat the same amount of it.

Of course, Benedick is referring to a man in normal health, and who is simply like the rest of us growing old. If, then, this disinclination to sustain life in its later years by the same diet enjoyed in youth, be apparent in any one not suffering from any

malady, how far stronger, we may assume, will be this disinclination when in conjunction with old age we are afflicted with an abnormally degenerated digestion. Thus, then, taking all this for granted, it should be plain that other people's food, if we can but fancy it, will be the most harmless stimulant to a failing appetite which can be adopted. But others may be needed to induce us to eat with some sensation of enjoyment, enough, as the saying goes, to keep body and soul together. And first amongst these others will be the attractive aspect of the food set before us. So intimately associated are all our sensations that, as has been hinted, the eye will ever play an important part in the matter of eating and drinking, and by giving a tempting look to a dish we are certainly resorting to a perfectly harmless and legitimate stimulant to the appetite. It may be accounted as one of the next best things to other people's food for so doing, and again, as has been hinted, it is one generally more under our own control. The eye acting on the mind prepares the first function of digestion by literally setting the mouth watering. This common expression is physiologically true, for the mouth does in reality water at the sight of tempting food. That is to say the salivary glands are excited by it, and the secretion of these glands plays one of the first parts in the process of assimilating nourishment. It has a direct chemical result on the food, such as, for instance, converting starch into sugar (as in the case of the starch contained in potatoes), and so preparing it in a degree for the next solvents which have to deal with it. It is scarcely necessary to point out that where food does not look tempting the mouth is not set watering. On the contrary, the salivary glands remain inactive, the food is not sufficiently moistened before it is swallowed, and consequently, therefore, lacks its proper preparation and is again consequently not so ready to be dealt with by the succeeding processes of digestion. These are patent facts to all who know anything of the subject, but they are inseparable from the question before us, and a person who does not relish the appearance of the repast he sits down to cannot be expected to enjoy it or digest it, and he thus lays himself open, as we have said, to being considered by the robust as dainty and fanciful. It is perfectly true, he is full of fads and fancies, but it is not his fault. As a rule it is due to the caution which nature with her silent voice is giving him, and he is a fool if he neglects it. Better to suffer from the gibes and sarcasms of the thoughtless and vigorous than from a weight on the chest and the score of succeeding discomforts, not to say evils.

After the eye come the nostrils in the list of legitimate stimulants to the appetite. The odour of viands vastly affects it, as everybody knows, and should be attended to accordingly. But then above all comes the taste of the food, and herein we approach what are the undue and dangerous provocatives to

eating. The temptations offered through the eye or the nostrils, not to speak of that moral and healthful temptation which we have chosen to call "other people's food," are safe and harmless, nay, as has been said, legitimate, compared with the allurements of the palate. These latter are with some people perfectly irresistible, and therefore require to be used with the greatest caution. We must put ourselves out of the way of such temptation if our condition of health is critical; and those who cater for us with any regard to our physical well-being must take care not to lead us, through a mistaken kindness, it may be, beyond the bounds of moderation, by presenting us with a succession of dainty dishes—or even of one, if by its exceeding richness and excellence of flavour it may be likely to induce us to partake too freely of it. It sounds like a truism to say it should be "nice," and calculated to satisfy the natural craving for pleasure in the act of eating. What one person calls delicious another finds commonplace, and what will tempt one person to go on eating will soon satisfy another and pall upon the palate, but it is not necessary to go into the question of the variation of taste. We know what we like ourselves and so do those who usually prepare our food.

What we have to guard against is that undue stimulation which comes from a succession of too delicious flavours, and which it is the ambition of all accomplished cooks to produce when preparing and serving refined and sumptuous repasts; and it is this very ambition which makes sumptuous repasts so fatal to weak digestions and dangerous to all. The harmonious variety and unexpected contrast presented by one dish after another inevitably lead to over-eating. They are the cunning devices of the *chef* to induce us to go on. We feel we have had enough, but suddenly a fresh dish appears, it looks and smells so good, and comes before us as such a pleasant surprise, that we are induced just to taste it; when lo! its flavour is so new and enticing that we find our appetite revive and we are quite ready to consume our fair portion of it. And so on, and so on, to the end. The cook has accomplished his purpose: he has tempted us by the skilful exercise of his art to eat three times as much as we wanted and ten times as much as was good for us.

It must not be considered, however, that a highly-elaborate meal, such as that above alluded to, will constitute the only temptation to over-indulgence in the luxuries of the table. Very plain fare indeed, consisting of one or two dishes at most, may be equally prejudicial if we do not keep a very sharp look-out, not only on our bodily sensations, but on our ideas concerning the effects of food. People often eat too much from the belief that if they do not take a large quantity of nourishment, they cannot keep up their strength, and they consequently go on eating as much as they can under this mistaken notion, albeit what they are eating is of the simplest and wholesomest. A pertinent illus-

tration of the mischief sometimes done under these circumstances is given by an able writer on these matters in the following anecdote, and which for this reason is worth reproducing here :

" 'Nobody ever repented of eating too little,' was the sage remark of an old gentleman on the verge of ninety, next to whom the writer had the pleasure of sitting at dinner the other night. The host was pressing him to take more, and urging him in the usual phrase, 'Why, you have eaten scarcely anything!'

"Now it is to be assumed that the old gentleman's words indicated one of the byways to health, along which he had travelled through his long life, and to which he owed his present remarkably hearty condition ; so it was suggested to him interrogatively that he had always been a small feeder.

" 'Yes,' he answered, 'ever since I was two or three and twenty ; up to that time I was a weakly fellow enough, and I used to make the great mistake of trying to eat and drink as much as I could, in the hope of becoming strong. All my friends and the doctors backed me up in my error ; but fortunately I found it out in time and "knocked off"—as your modern slang has it—more than half my usual amount of food and stimulants. I gave up the idea of making myself strong, and merely strove to make myself well, and so I was contented with eating just as much as I could digest, and no more. Of course, it took a little time and experience to discover the precise limits ; I could not adopt the golden rule of always leaving off with an appetite, because I never began with one ; but by persistently erring on the right side, I got hold of one of the great secrets of life—the secret of knowing when one has had enough, and after a year or two I became so much better that I used to find myself keenly ready to eat at meal-time, and by degrees actually acquired an appetite. Then, once found, I never destroyed it, but always determinately rose with a feeling that I should like to eat more. Naturally, the temptation for a while grew greater, as my digestion grew stronger ; but I was firm ; I did not behave ungratefully to my stomach, and immediately presume upon its increased powers by over-loading it ; I did not live to eat, but only ate to live ; and behold me ! I have no need to be very particular as to what I eat, even at my time of life ; I have only to be careful not to eat too much.'

"Here, indeed, is the secret of a great deal that is amiss with many of us. We are in the habit of eating too much, more than our digestive powers can tackle, and that which is not assimilated more or less poisons. The system becomes over-charged, and gives any latent tendency to disease within us every facility for developing itself. The question is, not so much what to eat, as what quantity to eat, and nothing but a sharp look-out kept by ourselves upon ourselves can give us the answer.

"The difficulties of this watchfulness chiefly arise in an inverse ratio with the necessity for encountering them. Strong people

with good appetites and to whom a mouthful or two more than they want does comparatively little harm, are told when they have had enough by simply finding their appetite appeased; whereas the delicate, to whom on the other hand a superfluous quantity of food however slight is deleterious, have no such guide."

Now, although it has been urged that "other people's food" is the safest stimulant for producing a healthy relish for food in those who lack natural appetite, it can be seen that it is not divested of danger. When partaking of it, we may yet be tempted to do so too freely if we do not keep a wary eye upon our reasoning faculties. For after all, whether the fare be elaborate or plain with which our friends regale us, it is probably in their society, their cheerful talk, and the general animation during the meal that the secret of its stimulation lies. Agreeable conversation, amusing topics, bright faces, these should always be the accompaniments to eating and drinking. The author above quoted further says on this head:

"The great essential for securing good health is securing a good digestion; and as throughout life there should be a time and place for everything, with everything in its place, in the rational conduct of life there should be no great difficulty in assigning to pleasant circumstances, events, and topics their proper place and time—that time being essentially dinner-time. . . . Whatever trials have to be faced, dinner-time and the time immediately succeeding it, are not the times to grapple with them, or dwell upon the means by which they are to be surmounted. If your digestion be a ticklish one, these, and such as these items in the art of living, should not be overlooked. Give at least the food which is necessary to sustain us the chance of doing so to its utmost. Again: highly animated discussions, lapsing often into violent arguments, are distinctly prejudicial at meal-time; for temper, if ruffled, will retard digestion as fatally as damped spirits will. . . . Hence it is that a repast partaken of in cheerful society and with pleasant surroundings is more likely to agree with us, and add its due quota to our healthful condition, than if eaten in solitude and gloom."

Nevertheless, it is this cheerful society, which usually accompanies "other people's food," which will constitute its danger. We may be so far beguiled into forgetfulness of ourselves and the limits of our digestive capacity that amidst the bright talk and laughter we may deem ourselves capable of doing exactly as our neighbours are doing. We shall forget, perhaps, that they are strong and *we* are delicate, and that to freely indulge after their fashion will bring dire retribution upon us. We must not let our spirits run away with us—we must morally introduce for our own special benefit our own special skeleton or mummy to the feast. We need not parade it ostentatiously and so make ourselves conspicuous as wet blankets; nor need we keep our own mental eye

so resolutely fixed on it that it shall entirely damp our own merriment. A glance at the unwelcome reprover now and then, just sufficiently often to act as a wholesome check to excess, should be all-sufficient for a reasonable being to prevent his dining "unwisely" or "too well." "Other people's food," therefore, partaken of with this discretion will assuredly often agree with us better than our own, and offer us infinitely more enjoyment—the animation and exhilaration accompanying it which so mainly helps us to this end are, however, the very elements which constitute its danger. Like everything else in this world, the bane is found in the very centre of the antidote, inseparably mixed with it, and it will rest with ourselves to "observingly distil it out."

Thus we return to our starting-point. A jaded or faded appetite is more safely satisfied, and usually with far less ultimate harm, by partaking of "other people's food," in the cheerful society of other people, than by any other means, let the robust laugh at us though they may.

W. W. FENN.

TAKEN FROM THE FRENCH.

A COMEDIETTA IN ONE ACT.

CHARACTERS.

SIR FELIX FRITTERLY.

ARTHUR VALLANCE.

COLONEL COSEY.

LADY FRITTERLY.

MYRTLE VANE.

SCENE.—Sir Felix Fritterly's Country House.

SCENE.—A handsomely-furnished apartment. Bay window (practicable) with curtains at R. U. E., conservatory C., doors R. and L., couch at R. C., chairs, piano, &c.

COLONEL discovered lying on couch—his handkerchief over his head—ARTHUR VALLANCE in morning costume.

ARTH. (looking at COLONEL). Still asleep! And yet I must awake him (striking a very loud chord on the piano).

COL. (pulling handkerchief off his head and sitting bolt upright on couch). Come in! (seeing ARTHUR) Oh, it's you? For goodness' sake, Arthur, don't make such an infernal noise! Do you want to dislocate that implement of torture?

ARTH. Don't you like it, uncle? I thought you were fond of music!

COL. You don't call that music, do you? (getting up from couch). I accept your friend Fritterly's invitation to his country house for a few weeks' quiet—

ARTH. Well? you've got it, haven't you?

COL. Don't interrupt me (snappishly).

ARTH. I was merely anticipating—

COL. Who the deuce wants you to anticipate! Take things as I do, and wait till they come round! My idea of a quiet life is to get up at eleven, when the world has been thoroughly aired by that beneficent warming-pan, the sun; next, breakfast at twelve—twelve's a lovely hour for breakfast!—have the morning papers all to yourself, and escape being dragged round the grounds like the rest of the visitors—to see the early peas, and the asparagus beds, and spring onions!

ARTH. Ha! ha! Well, what next?

COL. Breakfast over, a quiet nap; a bit of lunch at three; a heavenly slumber till dinner-time at seven; a cup of coffee, a cigar, and to bed at ten! That's my idea of a rational, peaceful existence!

ARTH. You'd better by half shoulder your gun and have a pop at the partridges!

COL. Thankee—I never went out with a gun but once in my life, and then I shot a couple of dogs and a gamekeeper; so I gave it up; for if I'd gone on as I began, dogs and gamekeepers would have been at a premium long before this!

ARTH. Ah! it was a bad business for you, uncle, that you didn't take a wife.

COL. It would have been a precious deal worse for my wife if I had!

ARTH. Well, every one to his taste. What you call existence I call a state of positive torpidity. It may suit *you*; but at my age a man hungers and thirsts after a little more excitement.

COL. Then why the deuce don't you take it? Go out fishing—in the duck pond—or go and see the cows milked, or the pigs fed; or, better still, here's no end of excitement for you under your very nose.

ARTH. Where?

COL. At that window (*pointing to window*), gardener always at work, rolling the lawn, or watering the flowers, or picking up worms, or killing slugs; and without the slightest fatigue for you; all you have to do is to settle yourself down at the window——

ARTH. Settle down, eh? My dear uncle, that's the very thing I want to do! In a word, Myrtle Vane—Lady Fritterly's sister——

COL. Ugh! The old story over again, eh? Lady Fritterly's sister is a niceish sort of girl——

ARTH. (*indignantly*). Niceish sort of girl! She's an angel!

COL. Rubbish! Besides, as I said before, you're too young to marry yet—wait another ten or fifteen years, and then begin to look about you. You hav'n't popped to her, have you?

ARTH. Popped?

COL. Proposed!

ARTH. No!

COL. Then how do you know she'd have you?

ARTH. Of course I don't *know*—but I think she *might*.

COL. There's a conceited young puppy for you!

ARTH. (*coaxingly*). Especially if you'll encourage my attentions—like my dear, kind old uncle!

COL. Which your "dear, kind old uncle" doesn't intend to do.

ARTH. You don't, eh? Very well; then listen to me! I shall do something desperate!

COL. Wait till I get out of the room! (*feeling his pulse*). I thought as much! Going like a windmill in a gale of wind!

This excitement's too much for me, I must take a sedative! (*takes pill-box out of his pocket—opens it and tosses two pills into his mouth one after the other*). And now, young fellow, listen to me. If you are so anxious to *settle*, as you call it, better begin with your bootmaker! In a word, you don't marry yet with my consent. Marry *without* it and I leave every shilling I've got to—to the Society for the Suppression of Virtue—I mean the Propagation of Vice—I don't know what I'm talking about! (*swallows two more pills, and hurries out at R., slamming door violently after him*).

ARTH. Just as easy to argue him out of his prejudices as it would be to make a Quaker kick his mother—oh! here comes Myrtle! What a contrast!—he all apathy—she all impetuosity! Of course, I shall have to give her an account of my morning's employment, as usual, which consists of breakfast—three slices of toast, a rasher of bacon, a couple of eggs, and a cup of coffee! and not a bad morning's work, either!

Enter MYRTLE at C. in morning dress—a large garden hat and gloves.

MYRT. Good morning, Mr. Vallance! has nature no attractions for you, that you remain indoors such a lovely day as this? Following your uncle's example, as usual, I presume?

ARTH. On the contrary! I've been very hard at work, I assure you, trying to reduce my uncle's bump of obstinacy.

MYRT. But in vain?—the *protuberance* defied your efforts. And has that been your entire morning's work?

ARTH. Physically, yes! Mentally, no!

MYRT. The *physical* we'll dismiss; the *mental* consisting of—reading the newspaper, eh? (*smiling*).

ARTH. What can a man do such weather as this? It's too hot to walk, too early for billiards—only fit for smoking. By-the-by, I *did* manage to get as far as the stables, where I had a cigar.

MYRT. And this is the new leaf you promised me you would turn over—a tobacco leaf! You are sadly deficient in energy, Mr. Vallance.

ARTH. I confess it. But brought up, as I was from my earliest infancy, under my uncle—

MYRT. (*smiling*). Under your uncle?

ARTH. Yes—(*suddenly*)—no, of course not. I mean under his *supervision*—how can I be otherwise than I am? He resents the slightest approach to activity as a slur on himself; and the highest compliment you can pay him is to yawn in his face (*checking a yawn with difficulty*).

MYRT. I beg pardon—I'm afraid I'm in the way.

ARTH. Not at all! But why are you in such a hurry to go?

MYRT. To allow you more leisure for (*imitating Arthur's yawn*)—you know!

ARTH. Oh, Myrtle—do you object to my calling you Myrtle?

MYRT. You should have asked that question before you *did*.

ARTH. If my tongue has been silent, surely my eyes must have spoken for me?

MYRT. (*stiffly*). Mr. Vallance, you forget yourself!

ARTH. Because I was thinking of you (*tenderly*).

MYRT. (*aside*). This is getting too serious. (*aloud*) But you really must excuse me. I have my plants to attend to—a favourite creeper especially that requires nailing up.

ARTH. Let me go with you. I'll make myself so useful—you'll see how hard I'll work. I'll hold the ladder for you, and hand you up the hammer and tin-tacks!

MYRT. What an exertion! And all for me! Ha! ha! ha!

ARTH. (*annoyed*). I see how it is, madam; you've no feeling, or you wouldn't treat me so cruelly, so capriciously! If you had the slightest particle of regard for me, you'd let me hand you up the hammer and tin-tacks!

MYRT. You accuse *me* of caprice! *you*, who never knew what it is to be in earnest!

ARTH. I am so *now*, I assure you.

MYRT. Then listen to me, Arthur Vallance. Let me see that you possess some energy, some enthusiasm, some strength of will, then I may perhaps give you a better answer. Good morning. (*Goes out at C. towards R.*)

ARTH. (*calling after*). Stop, Myrtle! Do let me come and hand you up the hammer and tin-tacks! So! I'm to do something energetic, am I? Drown myself in the duck pond? Yes!—No. I have it! I'll say good-bye to Fritterly, and cut this place at once! And then, Miss Vane, perhaps you'll be sorry—perhaps you'll regret that you didn't let me hand you up the hammer and tin-tacks! Let me see, there's an express to town at three (*looking at his watch*). I can catch that. My traps can follow (*hurrying up towards door L.H., and coming into collision with SIR FELIX, who enters at the same time*).

SIR F. Halloa, old fellow, where the deuce are you off to in such a hurry?

ARTH. Don't ask me—I'm going out of my mind!

SIR F. The deuce you are! Well, if I may judge by appearances, it won't take you very long to get to the end of *that* journey! Confound it, man, will you explain?

ARTH. Well, you know the feelings I entertain towards Miss Vane?

SIR F. Myrtle! Yes.

ARTH. Well, you'll hardly believe it, but when I proposed to her just now—

SIR F. You proposed to her? (*astonished*).

ARTH. Yes—to hand her up the hammer and tin-tacks—

SIR F. (*astonished*). Hammer and tin-tacks? What the deuce are you talking about?

ARTH. (*helplessly*). I'm sure I don't know—yes, I do. She said that when I showed a little energy—a little enthusiasm—a little something else, she'd perhaps give me a better answer.

SIR F. A better answer! What on earth can that mean?

ARTH. I can't tell! (*suddenly*) Yes, I can, of course! It can only mean one thing (*enthusiastically*)—that she *will* let me hand her up the hammer—

SIR F. (*shouting*). Confound it, drop that hammer! You've been hammering that hammer into my ears for the last ten minutes! Now! (*turning VALLANCE round to him face to face*). speak like a man of sense—if you've got any left in you!

ARTH. Well, then, I ventured to speak to my uncle—

SIR F. Old Cosey?

ARTH. Yes, old Cosey—about Myrtle, and he coolly told me I mustn't think of getting married for the next ten or fifteen years!

SIR F. Come, I like that!

ARTH. Do you? It's more than I do—unless, he said, he saw some urgent necessity for it, but that if I married without his consent he'd disinherit me.

SIR F. Is that all?

ARTH. All! It strikes me as being quite enough. No, it isn't all—it's only half, for Myrtle—

SIR F. (*cutting him short*). Never mind Myrtle. I know all about her. She thinks you a bit of a milksop—s—so do I; that you've no energy—not an atom! no will of your own—never had! and that in order to reinstate yourself in her good opinion, you must do something *desperate*! So you shall! Now what do you mean to do?

ARTH. Show a proper spirit, and—run away!

SIR F. Run away! Certainly not—fling yourself into my arms and I'll pull you through! So cheer up!

ARTH. It's very easy to say "cheer up" to a fellow who feels himself between two stools, with the certainty of coming down a cropper!

SIR F. But what's the use of giving you advice? you'd never follow it! You haven't the pluck to do anything desperate!

ARTH. I told uncle I would! but I'm not going to make away with myself merely to prove that I'm a man of my word!

SIR F. Pshaw! now let's understand each other. Myrtle insists on your giving her a convincing proof of energy—pluck—determination—and all that sort of thing! You're not limited as to the direction they may take?

ARTH. Not at all!

SIR F. Good—and your uncle refuses his consent to your marriage unless he sees some urgent necessity for it?

ARTH. Exactly!

SIR F. Then the same medicine will do for both! Old Cosey has a great regard for propriety and morality and all that sort of thing—hasn't he?

ARTH. Intense!

SIR F. Then we'll give him such a shock on that score, he'll think that his opposition to your wishes has driven you frantic with despair!

ARTHUR. But Myrtle?

SIR F. Has only to imagine there's a chance of your turning out a "naughty, good-for-nothing reprobate," and she'll be only too glad to reclaim her lost sheep at once!

ARTH. What then?

SIR F. Oh, then we must borrow a wrinkle from the French! As your uncle won't hear of your taking a wife of your own, take somebody else's!—no matter whose. Take *mine*, she's the handiest!

ARTH. Don't be absurd!

SIR F. I'm perfectly serious! All your uncle wants is to snooze away his existence. We must wake the old boy up!!

ARTH. How?

SIR F. By an elopement!! A *pretended* one, of course, which you shall propose to my wife, and *he* shall overhear!!

ARTH. I propose an elopement to Lady Fritterly? She'll be indignant!

SIR F. How do you know that? She may feel flattered! At any rate I'll take all the responsibility!—you may be as fascinating as you choose! Ha! ha!

ARTH. But, man alive, I'm not in the habit of running away with other people's wives! I shouldn't know how to begin. Something in this style?—"Please, ma'am, will you run away with me?"

SIR F. Not half tender enough!—(*clapping his hands and with exaggerated passion*)—"Loveliest of women"—then down on your knee—it don't matter which—both if you like. Then exclaim: "My bosom's torn with conflicting emotions"—"my brain is in a whirlwind of agony and despair"—tearing your hair out by handfuls all the time—don't forget *that*!

ARTH. Stop! Don't be in such a confounded hurry! Let me see! "Loveliest of women," one! (*counting on his fingers*)—"conflicting emotions," two—"agony," three—"despair," four. Can't you make it five—one for each finger?

SIR F. Five—the elopement!!—*there* you must come out a little stronger—(*declaiming in exaggerated tone*)—"Let us fly, loved one!—horses are in readiness to bear us to the nearest station, where the flashing express shall whirl us to—to——" anywhere you like—Madagascar—Serengapatam—Pegwell Bay—no matter!

ARTH. Oh! that's the style, is it? By Jove! I've half a mind to chance it!—but when is this precious scheme of yours to come off?

SIR F. At once! As soon as I can secure the presence of my wife, and old Cosey as a listener!—he always takes a nap on this couch when the coast is clear!—(*turns the couch round with back to the audience*). There!—now you take a stroll in the grounds—I'll hide behind the window curtains and give you the signal to come in. Be off—(*pushing him up stage*).

ARTH. Wait a minute—(*counting on his fingers*)—"Loveliest of women," "conflicting emotions," "agony," "paggony,"—no, not "paggony," "despair." Let me see, what's the little finger?

SIR F. The elopement.

ARTH. All right!

[*Exit at C. towards R.—counting his fingers*].

SIR F. He's gone at last! I ought to have been born in an atmosphere of diplomacy to develop my talent for intrigue! Ha, ha, ha! how this "little game" of mine will astonish them! But they all want waking up in this house! Cosey's an old hedgehog, all prickles and prejudices! Arthur's—never mind what! Myrtle's a crab apple—pleasant to look at, but occasionally rather tart to the taste! (*here LADY FRITTERLY enters at door L. unperceived by SIR FELIX*). As for my wife (*here LADY F. stops and listens*) she's a charming woman, but she has one fault, for which I'd gladly exchange a good many of her virtues—she's so dreadfully proper!! Shall I take her into my confidence? No! she hates jokes—especially mine—how she will stare when Arthur opens his batteries!—ha—ha!—run away with my wife!—the notion's too absurd.

LADY F. (*aside*). Indeed! So, so, husband of mine!—(*comes down and taps SIR FELIX on the shoulder*). Felix!

SIR F. (*turning*). Grace! (*aside*) I wonder if she overheard!

LADY F. You seem merry!—laughing at your own jokes? Quite right you should, for nobody else does!

SIR F. Thank you! (*aside*) All right! she didn't hear anything; perhaps I'd better prepare her, just a little bit, or she might petrify poor Arthur with one of her tragedy looks before he opens his mouth, and then he'd take to his heels to a certainty! (*aloud*) By-the-by, my dear Grace, have you noticed anything peculiar in young Vallance's behaviour lately?

LADY F. No, he seems as apathetic as ever; he may, perhaps, have shown a little more attention to me than usual (*with intention*).

SIR F. (*aside*). The deuce he has! I wonder what she'll say presently when he comes out with his "agony" and "despair?" (*aloud*) I don't mean his behaviour to *you*—but to Myrtle! He's not half so spooney, I mean attentive, as he used to be, and I fear there's a reason for it! (*with significance*).

LADY F. Indeed?

SIR F. Yes! he *may* be smitten with *somebody* else! At *his* age the affections are fickle, volatile—skipping like a flea——

LADY F. Felix!

SIR F. I mean *sipping like a bee* from flower to flower! Myrtle is young—very young; but even youth like hers *may* become insipid! The love of every precocious boy of fifteen is a woman of *thirty*! I began at twelve!

LADY F. A woman of thirty—*my* age! Understand, sir, that no woman cares to be reminded of her age when she is turned thirty any more than that she wears false hair! Your remark, therefore, is scarcely polite; but with your wife it appears you consider no such politeness necessary!

SIR F. Politeness! My dear Grace, what is politeness after all?—merely the gloss of society! I suppose you'll admit that the shiny stuff they put on the top of the buns doesn't make them taste any the sweeter?

LADY F. Spare me your absurd similes, and don't mistake flippancy for wit!

SIR F. (*aside*). That's a dig in the ribs for me! (*aloud*) But we are wandering from our subject! Do you think Myrtle loves Vallance at all?

LADY F. I fancy she likes him well enough!

SIR F. "Well enough" won't do! She must like him a *great deal* better—as I believe she would if we could only make her just a little bit jealous!

LADY F. Perhaps so—but how? My lady's-maid is no beauty! The housemaid's no chicken! The cook's too fat! And there's no one else!

SIR F. No, exactly! (*here LADY FRITTERLY turns and goes up stage*). Are you going out this morning?

LADY F. Yes, unless you wish for the pleasure of my society here!

SIR F. Well, it would be a novelty!

LADY F. And you promise to spare me the infliction of those melancholy exhibitions which you call jokes?

SIR F. I'll be as dull as an undertaker! Suppose you put a few stitches into that smoking cap of mine, which has been your sole occupation in needlework for the last two years and a half!

LADY F. Be it so! It's in my room—I'll fetch it! (*aside as she goes up stage*). So—so—he's evidently got some "little game" on hand—which it will be my business to find out! (*turning to SIR F.*) Ta! ta! (*goes out at door L. H.*).

SIR F. Poor unsuspecting innocent! it's too bad to take advantage of her simplicity! Ah! here comes old Cosey for his forty winks—better and better—but he mustn't see me! (*hides behind window curtain*).

Enter COLONEL at R.—looks round.

COL. Nobody here! got it all to myself! that's just what I like! I was afraid of meeting Fritterly! He's a pleasant fellow enough in his way—but I prefer being out of his way! To be within the sound of his voice is like living over a printing office—one continual clatter! Now, then, for a little solitary rumination!—there's nothing equals it. Look at a cow—how she enjoys it! and isn't she the most peaceful of all animals? Who ever heard of a cow in a passion? See the touching resignation with which she allows herself to be milked! I wish Arthur had more of that docile animal in his composition! He wouldn't talk of doing something desperate! Now, then, for a delicious nap! (*ties his handkerchief over his head and lies down on couch, and no longer in sight of audience*).

SIR F. (*peeping from behind curtain*). Thank you, Colonel, for your flattering opinion of me; but I'll be even with you! I wonder if he's asleep? (*advancing on tip-toe to couch*). Yes, sound as a top! Now, then, to call in Arthur! Stop a bit! let me first perform the part of the benevolent robin in the "Babes in the Wood" and cover this "Sleeping Beauty" up! (*carefully spreading several antimacassars over COSEY*). There! now for Arthur! (*runs to window and waves his hand*). All right; he sees me!

Enter VALLANCE at C.

ARTH. Well, you still stick to your plan?

SIR F. Like a horse-leech. My wife will be here directly!

ARTH. But Uncle Cosy?

SIR F. Comfortably tucked in there (*pointing to couch*), to be roused from the land of dreams when the proper time arrives with this implement (*taking a long feather brush*). Sure you've got your part in this little domestic drama by heart? Rehearse!

ARTH. "Loveliest of women," "Emotions," "Agony," "Serin-gapatam," "Despair," "Pegwell Bay"—

SIR F. Keep on going over it, like the multiplication table; but hang it, man, don't look as lively as if you were waiting in a dentist's back-parlour! (*suddenly*) Here comes my wife! (*hurriedly hiding behind curtains*).

Enter LADY FRITTERLY at L. H. carrying a smoking cap.

LADY F. (*seeing VALLANCE*). Mr. Vallance?

ARTH. Lady Fritterly! (*bowing*).

LADY F. (*aside*). The ball is about to open! (*aloud*) Won't you be seated? (*seating herself at L., ARTHUR moving a chair to some distance from LADY F. and seating himself*). A lovely morning, is it not? (*beginning to work at the smoking cap*).

ARTH. Delicious!

LADY F. Quite cool and pleasant!

ARTH. (*aside*). I feel quite hot and unpleasant!

LADY F. By-the-by, do you know where my husband is?

ARTH. (*fidgeting on his chair*). Not exactly; but I believe he's somewhere or other, or if not there, somewhere else.

SIR F. (*who has peeped out listening*). Idiot! (*hiding again*).

LADY F. (*observing the movement of the curtain—aside*). He's there! traitor! (*aloud*) I'm sure I ought to feel deeply grateful to him for leaving so agreeable a substitute.

SIR F. (*listening*). That ought to encourage him!

ARTH. (*aside*). It's time I began if I'm going to begin at all! (*suddenly and clasping his hands*) Oh, Lady Fritterly, pardon my agitation; but agitated as I am with the agitations that agitate me—the agony, the despair—(*aside*) I shall stick fast presently; I know I shall!

SIR F. (*listening*). That's better.

ARTH. But say—say you forgive me!

LADY F. Forgive you! for what? (*insinuatingly, and moving her chair nearer to ARTHUR, who draws his back*).

ARTH. For the confession which, alas! (*here a very deep sigh*) I am about to make.

LADY F. Continue, I beg!

ARTH. Oh madam, dear madam, dearest madam, if you only knew all!!

LADY F. Hall? A gentleman of your acquaintance?

ARTH. I didn't say *Hall*, madam! Let me observe, Lady Fritterly, that this is no subject for levity.

LADY F. No one would imagine it was from your countenance, Mr. Vallance; its solemnity is positively, painfully ludicrous!

SIR F. (*listening*). Why the deuce don't he open his batteries?

ARTH. (*seeing SIR FELIX, who is making energetic signs to him to proceed with his love-making—aside*). Well, since he will insist upon it, here goes! (*aloud and in an ultra impassioned tone*) Loveliest of women! pardon the apparent insanity of the remark; I love you!! adore you; in fact, I rather like you! Behold me at your feet! (*flopping down on one knee*). Here SIR F. reaches over and tickles COSEY with the feather brush, who starts up and shows his head above the back of couch, then seeing he is not alone, withdraws his head again out of sight).

LADY F. (*with pretended emotion*). Love me, Mr. Vallance? (*aside*) So this is the "little game" is it? (*aloud*) Well, is that all?

ARTH. All? (*aside*) And pretty well too, I think; what the deuce would she have? (*aloud and very enthusiastically*) No, madam, it is not all! I've only just begun! Oh! could you but know the conflicting emotions, the agony, the despair—(*counting on his fingers—aside*.) I forgot the rest! (*aloud*) Say, say that you love me in return! (*seizing her hand*).

LADY F. (*with pretended emotion*). Oh, Mr. Vallance, you're too vehement; release my hand!

ARTH. (*aside*). Release her hand! come, I like that! I wish

she'd let go of mine (*trying to disengage his hand, then catching another glimpse of SIR F., who by signs encourages him to proceed—aloud*). Release this hand? Not till I've finished! Loved one! let us fly, horses are waiting—flashing express—distant clime—Seringapatam—Madagascar—the Sandwich Islands—anywhere.

LADY F. (*with pretended emotion and an affecting faintness*). A sudden faintness (*leaning against VALLANCE*); oh! support me!

SIR F. (*looking out*). Halloa! Halloa!

LADY F. (*looking up in ARTHUR'S face and with mock sentimentality*). Oh! Arthur, Arthur!

SIR F. (*behind*). Damn it, she calls him Arthur!

VALL. (*aside*). I've been getting on too fast!

LADY F. (*pathetically to VALLANCE*). Spare my blushes; I guess all you would say.

ARTH. (*aside*). Do you? that's lucky; for I'm regularly stumped.

LADY F. (*suddenly grasping VALLANCE by the wrist and dragging him forward, almost upsetting him*). Listen! my husband is not unkind, though he might be kinder; he is not ill-looking, indeed, he might be uglier; but he has one terrible defect. (*SIR F. here leans forward and listens.*) He really flatters himself that he possesses a fund of wit; that he is literally running over with fun; whereas the poor man really doesn't possess a single particle of either. It's very sad, isn't it?

ARTH. Melancholy in the extreme.

LADY F. And I'm sure as for humour—

ARTH. He's just about as much in him as an old cab horse! (*FELIX shakes his fist at VALLANCE.*)

LADY F. But alas! for every one of his dismal jokes that you hear I am doomed to listen to a hundred! Is it to be wondered at then that I should pant, *crave* for a change?—(*gradually getting more excited*)—that I should find the temptation you offer me too great to resist?

ARTH. (*aghast*). Eh! what? You don't mean to say you consent?

LADY F. Of course I do! (*with enthusiasm*) What woman could resist the Sandwich Islands, and you for a companion! In five minutes expect me here on this spot; give me but time to pack up my jewels, a dozen or two dresses, and a sprinkling of hats, and I'll be with you, my Arthur! (*going—stops*) You won't mind my bringing my favourite little pug dog, of course you won't—(*going—stops again*)—and a couple of kittens—a thousand thanks—and you won't object to putting the parrot cage under your arm? I thought not. (*Runs hastily out at L. H.*)

(*During the above scene COSEY occasionally shows his head above the back of the couch and withdraws it again.*)

ARTH. A parrot cage under my arm all the way to the Sand-

wich Islands! (*shouting after LADY F.*) Stop! madam, Lady Fritterly, don't hurry yourself, take your own time—one hour, two hours, six weeks, any time you like. Wheugh! here's a pretty state of affairs, catch me running off with another man's couple of kittens—I mean wives—no, *wife* again! (*thrusting both hands into his trousers pockets and walking violently to and fro, then flings himself into a chair at L.* SIR FELIX hurries down and drops into a chair at R. COLONEL rolls off the end of couch enveloped in antimacassars, and seats himself in chair at C.—all pull out their white pocket handkerchiefs and indulge in extravagant business, &c.)

ARTH. (*not seeing them*). Poor Sir Felix!—a pretty kettle of fish he's made of it! I've been too fascinating!

SIR F. (*coming hurriedly down*). Don't talk nonsense, sir! but of course this is all a joke!—why don't you say it's all a joke?

ARTH. It's anything but a joke for *me*!—all the way to the Sandwich Isles with a parrot cage under my arm!—how would you like it?

SIR F. Pshaw! you carried the thing too far, sir!—a devilish deal too far!

ARTH. Come, I like that! I only did what you told me!—except that I didn't tear my hair out by handfuls!

COL. (*counting his pulse*). A hundred and twenty at the very least! (*tossing a couple of pills into his mouth—then to VALLANCE*). Now, sir! what do you mean by making love to Lady Fritterly, and proposing an elopement to her! It's scandalous, sir!

ARTH. Not the slightest doubt about it, uncle! but I only did it to oblige Sir Felix!

COL. *Oblige* Sir Felix by running off with his wife?

ARTH. Yes! in order to show you what a *desperate* dog I had become, so that you might put me out of the way of temptation by consenting to my marriage with Myrtle!—but now—(*with a deep sigh*)—that's all knocked on the head!

SIR F. How so?

ARTH. Because, my dear fellow, your wife having accepted, I am bound, as a man of honour, to run away with her!

COL. (*turning to SIR F.*). Of course, as a man of honour, we're bound to run away with her!

ARTH. A lady—(*here COL. turns to him*)—for whom I entertain the highest respect!

COL. (*turning to SIR F.*). A lady for whom we entertain the highest respect!

ARTH. But—(*here COL. turns again to him*)—for whom I don't care two pins!

COL. (*turning to SIR F.*). But for whom we don't care two pins!

SIR F. (*fiercely to COL.*). You needn't be insulting, by associating Lady Fritterly with that paltry amount of haberdashery!

COL. (*feeling his pulse*). I shall be in a raging fever presently!—(*two more pills*). What's to be done?—(*to VALLANCE*)—recollect you've got to ascertain when the next train starts for the Sandwich Islands!

ARTH. Hang it! Sir Felix! can't you suggest something? I look to you with your extravagant devices to extricate me!

COL. (*to SIR F.*). Yes, sir! We insist on your extricating us from your extravagant devices!

SIR F. Well! I confess I've made a slight mistake this time, but all isn't lost. Lady Fritterly will be here directly, when I flatter myself she'll hear something to her advantage—(*looking off at C.*)—here comes Myrtle!—couldn't be better! Now then, hide yourselves!—both of you!

ARTH. Certainly not!

COL. Certainly not!

ARTH. Another of your infernal schemes! if this fails, I really shall do something desperate—(*during this SIR FELIX has been edging him up towards curtains, and at last pushes him behind them at R.*).

COL. (*in a helpless tone*). My system won't survive this sort of thing! I'm sure it won't.

SIR F. (*hurrying down*). Now, Colonel, on to your couch before Myrtle sees you! (*edging him up towards couch*).

COL. (*resisting*). But I don't want to go to sleep! I'm thoroughly wide awake.

SIR F. Nonsense!—(*forces COLONEL on couch and heaping pillows over him*).

COL. (*showing his head*). Tuck me up if you like, but, confound it, don't smother me!—(*keeps rising, SIR FELIX pushing him down again at each attempt*).

ARTH. (*putting his head out from curtain*). Sir Felix!

COL. (*showing his head above couch*). Sir Felix! (*SIR F. seizes the nearest pillow and throws it at COLONEL'S head.*)

SIR F. Silence! both of you!

Enter MYRTLE at door L.H.

MYRT. (*laughing aside as she enters*). Ha! ha! poor Sir Felix! Grace has told me all, and I am to humour the joke while she watches the result from the conservatory!

(*During the following, until LADY F.'s entrance, the COLONEL shows his head occasionally above the back of the couch, but withdraws it again at a sign from SIR FELIX.*)

SIR F. (*aside*). Now for it!—(*coming down—takes MYRTLE'S hand, and in an exaggerated tone of grief*) Myrtle! Myrtle! in me you behold a broken-hearted husband!

MYRTLE (*aside*). Very well acted indeed!—(*aloud, and in a pretended tone of commiseration*) Broken-hearted?

SIR F. When I say "broken-hearted," I don't wish you to infer that the centre of my organic functions is snapped in half like a stick of firewood! far from it, Myrtle. But I'm broken-hearted for all that!

MYRTLE. Absurd! while you have Grace and me to console you!

SIR F. Grace no longer—she has deserted me, and for young Vallance!—(*falling into chair and burying his face in his hands*).

Here LADY F. appears at c. listening.

SIR F. (*peeping out at the corner of his handkerchief and seeing her—aside*). She's there!—(*aloud*) Yes, Myrtle, I'm a wretched, abandoned man!

MYRT. You can't be serious?

SIR F. It's too true!

MYRT. What—what do you intend doing?

SIR F. I did think of shooting the young man!—but it'll be a far greater punishment to let him live! Think what the poor, unhappy youth will have to suffer from Grace's "little bits of temper!" poor devil! I know what I had to go through—(*LADY F. shakes her hand at SIR F.*).

MYRT. But surely you will try and prevent Grace's departure?

SIR F. (*indifferently*). I think not!—better as it is—I'm getting used to the idea! I confess it was I who advised Vallance to make just a certain little amount of love to my wife in order to excite your jealousy and show you what energy the young man was capable of; but I must confess I was not at all prepared for the perfect torrent of impassioned eloquence with which he poured forth his unhallowed flame!—(*here VALLANCE shakes both his fists at SIR F.*).

SIR F. Besides, Myrtle, dear Myrtle, as you very sensibly observed just now, shall I not have you to console me? (*with an exaggerated tender look*).

MYRT. (*alarmed*). Me?

SIR F. Why not? Your lover doesn't care a pin's point about you, or he wouldn't have agreed to my plan—my wife has about the same amount of affection for me—or she'd have withered him up with her scorn at the first go off! This sort of thing! (*putting on a haughty and scornful look*).

MYRT. Well? What then?

SIR F. Can you ask? Oh, my Myrtle! my beloved Myrtle—behold me at your feet! (*falling on both his knees and seizing her hand—aside*) If Grace stands this, I'm a New Zealander!!

MYRT. Monster! (*flinging SIR FELIX from her, who falls on his face*). LADY FRITTERLY and VALLANCE hurry down).

LADY F. So! Sir Felix Fritterly!

ARTH. So! Sir Felix Fritterly!

SIR F. (*getting up quietly and dusting his knees with his pocket handkerchief. Then suddenly bursting out into a loud laugh*). Ha, ha, ha! Surely, my dear Grace, you didn't really think I was in earnest?

LADY F. (*smiling*). As much in earnest, probably, as you thought me. (*SIR FELIX takes her hand, and kisses it*).

ARTH. (*joyously to LADY F.*) Then you don't love me after all? You won't insist on my accompanying you to the Sandwich Islands?

LADY F. (*drawing herself up*). Mr. Vallance! (*to SIR FELIX*). Well, I confess you have the best of the game.

SIR F. And the last laugh!

ARTH. Myrtle, have I fulfilled your conditions—have I shown some little amount of energy?

MYRT. Yes! with a vengeance!

ARTH. And may I hope—?

SIR F. Have him now, Myrtle, while you can get him!

LADY F. Keep her to her promise, Mr. Vallance!

ARTH. Gladly! but it all depends on my uncle how soon!

SIR F. Then he shall decide at once! Turn out, old tortoise! (*wheels couch round to face the audience, and pulling off the antimacassars, &c., &c.*) Hang me, if he isn't fast asleep! Wake up! (*tickling COLONEL with the feather brush*).

COL. All right! Bring me my shaving water! (*sitting up, and looking about him*). Halloo!

ARTH. Have you forgotten all about the elopement, uncle?

COL. Elopement! Why! you ought to have been half way to the Sandwich Islands by this time!

ARTH. Ha! ha! We've arranged that little matter differently.

COL. (*crustily*). Then what the deuce did you wake me up for?

SIR F. To let you go off to sleep again in a more comfortable frame of mind.

LADY F. Come, Colonel! Arthur's desperately in love with Myrtle.

SIR F. And Myrtle's over head and ears in love with—

MYRTLE (*interrupting him*). Felix!

SIR F. With herself! They only wait your benediction.

COL. Bother the benediction! I'll settle a thousand a year on them!!

SIR F. (*shaking his hand*). The most sensible thing you've said for a long time—and now you may go to sleep again as soon as you like.

COL. Thank you! (*feeling his pulse*). Ninety! that's better!

SIR F. But a word at parting here! (*to Audience*). How account for our eccentric behaviour? Shall we boldly forestall the critics and say at once—?

MYRT. Quite foreign in sentiment——

ARTH. Obviously borrowed from our lively neighbours——

COL. (*sententiously*). Possessing all their levity with regard to those domestic ties——

LADY F. (*putting her hand over his mouth*). In short—Taken from the French!

CURTAIN.

“SUMMER HOURS.”

I.

Sitting in the long grass
Weaving daisy chains,
Watching dusty hay carts
Rolling down the lanes.
Soft, delicious odours
Mingle with the heat,
Heavy-headed clover,
Snowy meadow-sweet.

II.

“Tip” is lying near me,
Idly snapping flies,
Rosy tongue out-lolling,
Blinking watchful eyes.
Swallows skim around us,
Laden bees boom past—
“Tip” is off in breathless,
Hopeless chase at last!

III.

Tossing (all unskilful)
Faintly scented hay,
O the happy hours!
O the sunny day!
Full of song and gladness,
Leaving us too soon,
Passing heedless onward,
Summer's golden noon!

IV.

Cloudlets cluster rosy;
Growing shadows creep,
And the stately pine-tree
Rocks the dove to sleep;
Phyllis hastens homewards,
Nodding daisies close
Dewy, silken lashes
Ere their lover goes.

V.

O'er the drowsy meadow
Ringing voices cease,
Twilight gathers softly
Bringing rest and peace.
“‘Tip,’ when time has sprinkled
You and me with grey,
Wistfully we'll dream of
Clover fields and hay!”

A VISIT TO A PERSIAN BRIDE.

BEFORE the door of every Persian woman's garden there hangs a canvas blind, to shut out the gaze of the curious. As soon as this curtain was drawn aside, I found myself surrounded by, what seemed to me to be, a troupe of ballet girls clothed in green, or yellow, or red, or purple, according to the taste of the wearer.

Amid this bewildering assemblage of petticoats, I, in my cotton dress, both felt and looked utterly incongruous to the place, much as a dusky brown-coated sparrow would if placed in a cage filled with gorgeous tropical birds.

In a second every eye was upon me, every neck strained to get a good look at the *feringhi* (a name by which all Franks are known throughout Persia) woman. But as politeness and etiquette are very prominent features of a Persian's character, the impropriety of keeping me waiting outside soon dawned upon them.

The bride herself came forward, and taking me by the hand, addressed me in all manner of pretty speeches, for in Persia the most ordinary form of greeting is a series of compliments, and our commonplace "How d'ye do" a complicated ceremony of motions and honied words.

She then led me through a labyrinth of doors and small yards into a large and well-planted garden, where I was presented to her mother and sisters and aunts and numerous friends, all of whom professed themselves more than charmed to see me.

Why had I not been before? Would I not come again? Soon, very soon. Every day? All that they possessed in the world was mine, and so on.

I repaid their kindness by wishing in the best Persian my tongue could fashion that the bride might have every happiness and joy!

By this time we had arrived at the tank which is found in every garden, large or small, throughout the land of Iran, and which, in honour of my visit, was strewn over with pink rose leaves in various designs. Round three sides of the tank were chairs and cushions and divans, whilst the fourth, or more open space, was reserved for the dancers and singers. Bouquets of roses and lamps were placed alternately at intervals near the edge of the

basin. The seat of honour was given to me, the bride sitting on my right, her elder aunt (her uncle had two wives) on my left.

Persians think a great deal of appearance and outward show, and all the ladies were decked in their gaudiest attire, and were blooming in all the fictitious glories of painted womanhood!

Fair hair and eyes are not admired by them, but a fair skin and florid complexion are greatly sought after, and calls forth the tribute of general admiration. Even when Nature has distributed her gifts to them with no niggard hand, they will furbish up the complexion with quantities of *rouge* and powder until they look like full-blown roses.

Many an old woman of hideous forbidding aspect, whose appearance would be invaluable in melodrama, is made up into the bad semblance of a young woman; the furrows Time with his ruthless fingers has traced are filled in with powder, not artistically faced as the European *belle*—many of whose charms might not bear close overhauling—often sets off her loveliness with artfully-arranged aids to beauty, but laid on in thick layers.

Although the bride was very young, having at the most seen sixteen summers, *rouge*, alas, was no stranger even to her pretty face!

Her hair, which was jet black and very long, was plaited into a number of tiny tails, the ends of which peeped forth from under the *chagat* of folded white linen she wore on her head. Nothing can exceed the ugliness or unbecomingness of this head-gear; it is merely a square piece of muslin or cotton folded corner-wise, and tightly fastened with a pin or tiny brooch under the chin, with two ends hanging down the back, and the remaining two falling over the breast. Over this again is worn the house veil, which envelopes the whole figure; it is a large square or rounded piece of muslin or gay-patterned chintz, and is not fastened on, but simply kept in its place by the arms.

Her voluminous skirt was of white and pink striped satin, handsomely trimmed with gold lace, and reached only half-way to the knee; the legs were bare. Often as many as twenty yards of silk or satin are employed for these skirts, which are gathered into a band at the waist, and are worn over four or five petticoats very much stiffened. The more a skirt stands out the more fashionable it is. The bodice is a loose sort of jacket of silk or velvet trimmed with gold lace, the sleeves are long, and terminate in a pointed cuff that turns back, reaching nearly to the elbow. This is worn over a calico or linen shirt. Although all dresses agree in their leading features, and the fashions never change in the East as they do in the West, yet they differ to a great extent in detail, and afford a scope for the peculiar taste or fancy of the wearer. The contrast between indoor dress and walking attire is very striking. So great is the formal restraint under which they are placed, that a woman may not uncover her face before any man

who is not her father or brother or husband; therefore, when abroad they are shrouded in dark blue calico or silk mantles



A PERSIAN LADY IN WALKING ATTIRE, BACK AND FRONT VIEW, BY A PERSIAN ARTIST.

which entirely conceal the form and make all Persian women look exactly alike. The face is covered with a *rubanda*, or thick white

veil. These veils have a sort of fine lattice-work let in just across the eyes, which serves a two-fold purpose, as a ventilator and a space to look through. This is worked in white, or rather *écru* silk, and is so exceedingly fine that the sight of the workers is often much impaired.

When a woman goes out, her numerous skirts are thrust into voluminous trousers, which are gathered at the ankle into a sort of sock, made of the same material as the trousers. The shoes are broad, and only cover the toes, and seem difficult to keep on, yet Persian women do not appear to be inconvenienced by this, and can go very quickly in them, albeit, in rather a shuffle than a walk, the shoes with each step making a clatter on the stony roads.

Tattooing is very common among the women, who often have an elaborate pattern tattooed just below the chin, and extending round the neck; the wrists are also adorned with marks, and if devoutly disposed, the name of some *Imamu* or pet saint, or some sacred words from the Koran are indelibly marked upon the arm.

But by this time the dancers are ready. Two girls come forward slowly—for the true Oriental is never in a hurry—remove their *chagats* or head covering, and bow to the assembled guests. For some seconds they stand quite motionless, then the eyelids begin to move, and by degrees each muscle commences to quiver until every limb is affected. Although all present, with the exception of myself, had seen this a thousand times before, no sooner had the dancers advanced than the attention of every one was engrossed. The performers then bent their heads gradually back until they almost touched the ground, then they raised themselves, and leaned forward until they sank down upon their knees, still quivering in every muscle, until at length they lay prone on the ground. For some seconds they remained there quite motionless, as though animation were entirely suspended. The first sign of returning life was to move the heads from side to side, the quivering motion recommences, and the dancers assume their upright position and break into a sort of badly-danced polka. This native dancing might almost be called a song illustrated by gestures and posturing rather than dancing in our acceptance of the word. These song dances are usually accompanied by a din of tom-toms, or a squeaking sort of violin, but played by the fingers only; the sounds produced are monotonous, and not pleasing to European ears; the movements of the dancers are marked by castanets.

Persian music and singing are very different to our Western ideas of harmony, and the rendering of a song so ridiculous, being more a series of grimaces and contortions than melodious intonation. Yet Persians rave about their music just as they do about the sweetness of their fruits, the beauty of their women, the

fertility of their country, and I have no doubt that our music is just as discordant to their ears as theirs is to ours.

Night after night they will sit up at these and similar entertainments, which to us would be insupportably tedious, and this music and singing will hold them breathless and unwearied.

The tambourine is a very favourite instrument; it is held upon the lap and is played by striking the tightly-stretched skin with the second and third fingers of the right hand and the four fingers of the left hand.

I will leave the dancers and singers while I am being entertained with all the ceremonial of Eastern etiquette. A table is placed before me, which is soon crowded with a motley array of glass dishes, and plates and bowls containing sherbets of different kinds are handed round. These sherbets are very delicious, and are made of almost any sort of fruit; next to tea, they form the principal beverage in every household. The *kalian* or water-pipe makes its appearance, and the orthodox three whiffs are puffed by each lady in turn, except myself, and after it sweetmeats of many kinds are brought, some extremely pretty to look at, but so dreadfully sweet and murky that I find it difficult to taste more than one. My kind friends are distressed beyond measure, and send off to the house in search of other delicacies that I may deem more palatable. No pipe, no sweetmeats, was such a thing ever heard of; they could not live without them! As most of these good things have been prepared under their own supervision, and with the greatest care for my special benefit, I feel sorry to disappoint them; but I know that if I once begin, I must partake of all. A bright idea strikes me, and I explain that our dinner hour is at hand, at which, if I have no appetite, T—— will be displeased; but if they will give me some of the dainties to take home, I will try them in the morning, to which they fervently respond *Tushallah*—Please God.

Oriental are much more easily amused than we are, and I must confess, that in spite of the novelty of the scene, the constant repetition of dancing and singing soon wearied me, and moreover it was evident that the dancers were becoming exhausted. I therefore made known my intention of taking leave as soon as convenient. Upon seeing this, the chief *danseuse* now addressed me in person, hoping, in a few graceful and well-chosen words, that I had been pleased by the performance, and praying that my shadow might never be less!

ELIZABETH'S FORTUNE.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MY NEW DEPARTURE.

GRANDCHESTER is a town whose face depends entirely upon the spectator. The tourist sees there an ancient cathedral city of prime curiosity and interest; the commercial traveller a market-town of 21,000 souls, where trade is slack and the inns afford but cold comfort; the lady or gentleman resident—but no, let them pass for the present. To the poor player, on stage-business bent, Grandchester is notorious as the least happy of hunting-grounds; which may have been why, at first sight of it, I could have vowed that of all dead-alive, dismal spots in our island this was the queen. The drizzling rain that was falling seemed as settled a feature of the physical geography of the place as the swampy meadows and weed-choked river in whose arms it lies. I wished my task here well over, and myself in London, making ready for a new start.

I had joined company with Annie—fresh from America, in fine looks and spirits—at an intermediate station. The train was so late at Grandchester that we had to put off lodging-hunting, leave bag and baggage, and post straight to the theatre for rehearsal. Never in my life had I felt in so peevish, so discontented a humour. Could this come of living in clover in great houses, the corrupting influence of “high life,” on which Beattie Graves, the greatest lover of ease alive, would thunder away like a new apostle? I blushed at the thought, with a prick of shame, as we jolted along in the omnibus from the station to the theatre.

Major Rubicund, getter-up, manager, treasurer, costumer, prompter, and principal actor in the present entertainment, was a portly amateur of fifty, with something like the soul of a Charles Mathews in something like the person of a Daniel Lambert. He was awaiting us on the stage and accosted us heartily, but in a style that made me start, as you might if a thoroughbred hunter began to sing out like a jackass.

“Welcome, ladies! Got into such a pucker. Thought you were sly and going to give us the slip this afternoon. Didn’t know for the soul of me what to be at. Some of our squad are so terribly rusty, it would be death and destruction, you know, if the

rehearsal ran up a tree. Now you're on the spot it's all square, and Rubicund breathes again."

The good major—let me hasten to state—when in polite society was never known to express himself otherwise than as a Christian or an ordinary man, and with no more than a fashionable dash of bad grammar and slang. Only with the Bohemian set he loved to dip in his habit was to adopt what he thought a fitting style of address.

Full of new-made resolutions to be affable, and take people and things as they came, and seeing Annie absorbed by the courtesies of a captain who appeared to be a somebody, I at once cheerfully answered the major in his own jaunty vein:

"All square! Give us twenty minutes' law for block on the line, and up to time as near as can be, if I can trust my ticker. Now what's the business?"

"We want to run through the second piece first, because it's the shakiest. Ready, everybody? Strike up! Hang it, no; we're waiting for some one. Who is it? That tiresome young scamp of a——. Confound his unpunct——. Oh! there you are. Look alive, man, do, for gracious sake!"

At sight of the truant whose shadow darkened the doorway my heart stood still with surprise. James Romney, or eyesight's a traitor. And I had had no forewarning of any kind, to forearm me a little. Fortunately the substantial screen offered by the major's person gave me a moment to recover my balance before the delinquent, after shaking hands with Annie, came up to him leisurely, saying:

"Sorry to be late. Detained at the barracks by——"

"All right. No time for apologies. Start 'Ladies Battle' at once. Let me introduce you to our Léonie—to—to——" he stopped, at fault; for Annie, characteristically, had forgotten to present me by name.

"Miss Adams!" supplied the amazed introduced, as my screen moved from in front of me.

"Mr. Romney," I returned quietly, with a bow and a beating heart.

I had no reason, oh none, I assured myself, to be glad of this encounter. What feeling could the remembrance of the past leave alive in me towards him but a natural, just resentment, that bound a girl who respected herself to meet him with the indifference and contempt he had so fairly earned?

Mr. Romney, it was plain, was tremendously taken aback by the whole thing. He said not another word, and kept his distance carefully, till he had regained his equanimity. In the play, which was set going forthwith, he acted to admiration, I must own; the others positively to execration, as Major Rubicund told them. They lost their cues and their speeches, they bungled the action, they confused the sense, and the greater the grief they came to

the greater, to their minds, the fun of the thing. Major Rubicund took it seriously to heart; he would have torn his hair, could his head have afforded it. He rated Mr. Romney for his indifference, declared it was a riddle to him. By rights should I too have been distressed that my name should appear in connection with so disgracefully feeble an exhibition. But I was no more distressed than Annie, who flirted through her part with Captain Somebody, I struggling through my own as well as the blunderland we were in permitted—very ill, I think.

The two other pieces proved in scarcely better condition. I had no part in number three, but stayed to watch it, and by-and-by James Romney found his way round to me from the opposite side of the stage. But once there he seemed struck dumb by a deadening shyness. Bent on not appearing embarrassed or flustered, I presently began, openly:

"Pray let me congratulate you, Mr. Romney, on having got your own way in the matter of your profession. Where there's a will, you know——"

"Yes," he said, with a look as of pleasant surprise at my good memory. "My father and I came to terms. I had a run of luck at starting too, and here I am. I had to engage to live on my pay, and that's what I'm doing—trying to do—now. It can be done. I know a man who did it," speaking as if it were a conjuring trick.

I remarked that at least it was certain from the beginning, unlike an actor's pay, precarious up to the end.

"Where are you staying?" he asked after a pause.

"Nowhere," I answered, starting. "That reminds me, I ought to be lodging-hunting now. Annie may be kept here for another half-hour. Major Rubicund, I think my work is over till to-night. Will you give me leave for the present. Good-afternoon, Mr. Romney."

He followed me to the stage door and there demanded:

"Can't I be of service in helping you to find lodgings?"

"Would you tell me the names of the best confectioners?" I suggested. "I always try first for rooms at a confectioner's. It sounds so English and respectable, and tea and buns are good things in their way."

He laughed and named two. He looked almost as if he was only waiting for an invitation to accompany me, but something closed my lips.

I soon secured lodgings at the second-best pastry-cook's, and our luggage from the station. With a pang of regret I remembered I had not brought down my blue dress. Wishing would not bring it now, or there it had been. For I had no idea my white one was so shabby. And after the play we were going to supper at the barracks, where a strong gas-light would be sure to expose the weak points in one's attire.

Of the performance I need say no more than that it was brilliantly successful, just as though it had been first-rate. It was for a popular charity, Major Rubicund was a popular character, and the theatre, which stood empty when Miss Hope and Beattie Graves came down with a good company, was crammed with the best society Grandchester afforded, civil and military, with a little clerical leaven, somehow leavening the lump. They applauded when we went right, applauded when we went wrong, thundered applause when we broke down, applauded every one with glorious impartiality, till they nearly applauded us into thinking we were not so bad after all. Not the hardest-won victory, not the Victoria Cross, I suspect, could have been as deliciously gratifying to the major as the acclamations that greeted his efforts throughout, and the special call given him at the fall of the curtain.

The supper-party at the barracks, to which we were quickly whirled off, consisted chiefly of gentlemen, including, besides, two or three officers' wives, whose prestige must have stood either so high or so low that it could not be harmed by their meeting actresses. But ladies were scarce enough to be very precious. I am positive that that young Lieutenant Romney was never intended for that seat on my right hand, but once there he became dead to hints, winks, innuendoes that he had slipped into some bigger man's place, and that the bigger man was confounding his audacity. They silently denounced him as obtuse and peculiarly ill-mannered. He was a very resolute young man, was Mr. Romney, and perfectly awake to it that he had offended Captain Somebody, and Major Rubicund, because he had offended Captain Somebody.

Before my left-hand neighbour had quite done pulling his moustache, the offender on my right began :

"What have you been doing with yourself this long time, Miss Adams?"

"That's a rather sweeping question, Mr. Romney," said I, looking up. In spite of his easy question his manner was constrained, not at all what it used to be.

"I've told you about myself," he said. "Won't you do as much by me?"

"Mine's a rather longer story," I replied, and hesitated. "The surprising part of it is that I have been off the stage now for more than six months."

"What surprises me," he said, "is to see you on it again."

"I left Miss Hope's company," I said, "as soon as the American tour was decided upon."

"Of course," he put in as I paused.

"And why of course?" I asked, piqued by his tone, "since of what led to my leaving, you, at least, can have no idea."

Our looks met, blank and baffled, like two who have struck out

at each other and hit something else that has sprung up between. We looked away, and my other neighbour profited by the moment to engage me in conversation. It was long before I was free to turn to Mr. Romney. My glance of silent inquiry forced him to speak, but with reluctant, half sullen civility.

"You mean you couldn't go to America. I understand."

"Do you?" I was hurt by his tone; but something moved me to add, "Mr. Slater put conditions to my going I couldn't accept. He wanted me to go as his wife."

"And that was impossible, of course," he said as before.

"Why of course?" I was getting angry and bitter, as I remembered a thing or two. "What just cause or impediment should you suppose existed to that arrangement?" He answered indifferently:

"Possibly a counter-arrangement with somebody else."

At such banter, from him, my temper rose in indignation. "Mr. Slater had befriended me," I said, "and I had no suspicion he was worse than other men. And perhaps he wasn't," I put in viciously, "and maybe if it hadn't been for Miss Hope, who assured me he bore a bad character and would make me miserable, I should have consented." He looked at me with an indescribable expression, saying with really wicked irony:

"Well, there's no accounting—but what would Mr. Danvers have said to that? You threw him over then—the manager cut out the millionaire in the end."

"Mr. Danvers!" I stared at him blankly. I had almost forgotten our parvenu patron and his attentions to me on a certain evening. It was unpardonably silly of Mr. Romney to recall them, and why was he looking so contemptuous and so grim? "You will please be so good as to explain," I told him in a stifled voice.

"There's nothing to explain," he said impassively. "I suppose you haven't forgotten the day—my last at Plymstone—when I called at the Lees, and found him doing the honours of the place to a lady visitor."

"Did he chance to tell you the purpose of her visit?"

"No; he was mysterious, but in high feather, seemed delighted when I chaffed him about it. I told Miss Torrens that night as a good joke, 'It's my firm belief the old fellow's thinking of marrying some young lady.' It remained to put a name to the young lady. Annie Torrens did that for me."

"Mr. Romney!" I exclaimed in incredulity. "It is impossible you can have thought seriously—you never spoke of this to me."

"What could I say?" he replied, "after her assurance that the affair had been settled between you that afternoon, that he had paid down a large sum to enable you to cancel your engagement to Miss Hope and leave the stage at once. She showed me the cheque."

"He gave me five hundred pounds," said I, "for Miss Hope, who was bankrupt, and threatened with an execution in the theatre. In a few hours the properties and salaries might have been seized and the performance stopped. All this was a secret then, but need be none now. I did what may perhaps have been indiscreet, but I should do it again, Mr. Romney. I went straight to Mr. Danvers for Miss Hope, since she was unable to go herself. I explained everything, and he readily lent her the money, which saved her then, and since that her affairs have been arranged, I understand. Mr. Danvers was repaid by Mr. Slater within the week."

"Did Miss Torrens know of this?"

His voice was so changed that instinctively I looked up to make sure who was speaking.

"Know? Everything. She was at the bottom of the raid. Why, Mr. Romney!"

He had turned perfectly livid. The muscles of his face were immovable, but self-control ended there, and his colour betrayed the violence of the stir of rage within. He looked across at Annie, who sat smiling and tittering with his superior officers, more fiercely than I thought his blue eyes could look; she smiled back blandly and engagingly. He tried to speak, but anger choked him.

When, the next minute, we rose from table, Major Rubicund came to give me his arm, remarking, as the young man was shoved aside rather pointedly:

"I say, Romney, we can't have you monopolizing Miss Adams in this fashion. If she isn't tired of you by this time she ought to be."

I don't think he heard. Our party now moved into another room, where began the stage of comic songs and practical jokes. It was my turn now to talk and laugh with the somebodies of the garrison. Mr. Romney kept his distance and stood silent, leaning against the door, with that concentrated fury in his eyes unabated.

He avoided looking at me, but glared at Annie as if he wanted to annihilate her. At the last moment, before going, I passed him, and stopped to say:

"Mr. Romney, there has been a very strange misunderstanding—but nothing is half so strange to me as the explanation."

"There has been a plot and a liar," he said, still looking ferociously at Annie,—bewitching to behold, with a fluffy white wrap round her head, all gaiety and innocence as she wished her good-nights.

"Had she a grudge against you?" he asked presently, keeping beside me as we walked through the barrack square.

"She had three," I replied. "First my engagement in the company, secondly my promotion to the part she threw up

thirdly my little success as May. But you know what she is—what a mischief-lover, and how reckless where she strikes in her spite—for her it's play." I choked to think of her easy influence in this quarter. But I added:

"We are going to walk back—it is so fine. Major Rubicund is coming. Will not you?"

He shook his head. "Not to-night. She goes back with you. I can't come near her. I think I could tear her to pieces. But to-morrow, what are you going to do?"

"I am going to the cathedral service at ten. Afterwards we rehearse at the theatre. Major Rubicund drives us out in the afternoon; then comes the evening performance, and I start for London next morning by the ten o'clock train."

He listened with a stoical expression, but not another word passed. I walked home with Annie and an escort some seven strong of smoking, hilarious, facetious, gallant men of war, joining in the mirth, whilst feeling more utterly miserable than I ever felt in my life, and that now, for certain, I could never forgive Mr. Romney.

My programme for the morrow was carried out to the letter. I attended church and intended to attend to the service. We rehearsed for two hours, and after luncheon drove to Sandy Point on the officers' drag. This time special precautions were taken to keep a certain young lieutenant in his proper place in the background, and he showed no disposition to push forward. The night's performance went off as merrily as the first; I got through mechanically and correctly, without pleasure—praise and applause were tasteless. Finally at supper the whole length of the table was interposed between my yesterday's neighbour and me. There was a conspiracy to pay him out for his forwardness. He might scowl and sulk, but no loophole was allowed. The very last moment came. I looked up at him as we were going. He said nothing as he held out his hand. It was I who spoke.

"Good night, Mr. Romney, and good-bye, if I don't see you before I leave."

"Can I?" he asked in rather a hollow tone.

"You know where we are lodging. To-morrow morning until ten you would find me, if——"

"But not with that woman by," he stipulated, with a savage intonation.

"She never gets up till nine," I represented. "You might come before breakfast, at eight, if you care to—to—say good-bye."

Whether it were some further effect of soft living in clover, or that the beds at the pastry-cook's were really hard as planks, I slept ill that night. At six I started up thinking what a scare-crow I should look if by chance he came. I ran to the glass and was horrified by my reflection. I was pale, and my eyes were red, as if I had been crying. A happy thought struck me. It was a

bright morning, and a little walk works wonders towards freshening one up. Eight o'clock I had told him. It was barely seven when I stepped out into the empty street. Apparently Grandchester was still asleep. I must be sure and not lose my way, as there was no one astir to direct me. From the High Street I struck into a side footway leading to the Castle Green, as the public gardens were called. At the turning of the lane, whom should I meet but him of whom I was thinking. So early! We reddened like two children caught stealing sweets.

"I had a headache," I quickly explained, "and came out to try and walk it off."

"I got up at six, thinking it was seven," he confessed. "Impossible to go to bed again of course, so I came out. Now we are here, shan't we stay out of doors? Come into the Castle Green."

"It is pleasanter than in Mrs. Crump's back parlour," I allowed.

"We shall have the land to ourselves. Mrs. Grundy isn't up yet," he remarked laughing, "to think or say anything."

"Nobody knows me here," I replied, "so it can't matter a bit what she thinks or says."

"Don't say that," he said suddenly and hurriedly, as we passed through the turnstile.

You know how places once strange change their faces as they become familiar. The time was to come when I could hardly believe that those gardens were the same I first entered that September morning with Mr. Romney. To be sure I never had occasion to visit them again at so early an hour. They were quite empty, and the windows of the houses overlooking them all staring white blinds. We felt right out of humanity's reach, as we sauntered down the lime avenue, talking, at first spasmodically—a sort of accompaniment to our walk; then the talk became the main thing, and we seated ourselves on a bench by the fountain in the centre of the broad walk. I had been telling him briefly how I had passed the last half-year.

"What are you going to do," he said, "when you get back to town?"

"Try and find an engagement. Miss Hope will help me, and if I am lucky you may hear of me again, on the London stage, who knows?"

"What can you have thought of me," he exclaimed abruptly, after a short silence, "when I went off in that mad slinging way?"

"Don't remind me," I said with a catch in my breath. "I—I—no matter what I thought—it wasn't half so bad as the truth. That you should take the first wild story Annie or any spiteful person trumps up for gospel—though it goes against all nature!"

"No, no," he said excitedly, "you don't see what I saw. I knew Danvers, good fellow though he is, for a vain, stupid old fool."

"For caring about me, as you thought?" I asked.

"I didn't mean that."

"What can you have thought of me, is the question," I remarked with the gravest reproach.

"I was so knocked over. What could I think? That here perhaps was a rich man who would make you his darling and give you a position in the world. Girls are so deadly practical nowadays. There wasn't another in Plymstone who wouldn't have met him half way. What right had I to be rough on you if you saw your way to being happy as the lady of the Lees? But I was."

"Did you believe it really?" I said, still puzzling.

"Well," he said with a quaint candour, "it was like this—the whole story might or might not be true, but for me, just then, it was enough that there should have been a thought of the sort in your mind, or in his. For do you know how foolish I was in those days? I used to fancy you liked me."

"Very foolish," I sighed inaudibly. I supposed we were wiser now.

"And what made me so wild was that I had been thinking I should go away with a certain hope to work for. Then it came on me what a fool I was making of myself. And I thought if I had his neck here, I should like to wring it."

"Poor old gentleman! but he never thought of me," I assured him.

"I'm not so sure of that," he muttered to himself. "Then I had nothing and he had three hundred thousand pounds."

"There, there; depend upon it he wouldn't be sorry to be a young lieutenant of four-and-twenty with five shillings in his pocket and his life before him."

"Perhaps—I don't know," the said lieutenant muttered, then asked diffidently:

"Can you ever forgive me?"

"Why do you want to know?" I asked unsteadily. "It can't matter to you much what I think, I suppose."

"Why?" he returned. "Had you no idea that it might, that day at Talaton, on the ley?"

"I wish I could forget it; I've tried," I said painfully. "Yes, I thought then you did understand me a little. But the first bit of gossip that's dropped you accept, and act upon it though it contradicts what you know of me yourself."

He looked deeply distressed. "I thought she was your friend, and speaking what she knew. She praised you and declared she envied your luck. What right had I to say a word, or even to ask you to explain how it was we had become bad friends all of a sudden? I know I went off cursing old millionaires in my heart. I should have cursed young simpletons."

"Stop, Mr. Romney," I broke in, "I do want to be friends with you."

"Friends," he repeated with a dubious emphasis.

"It's better than enemies, isn't it?"

"There's something better still," he said with a quiet earnest.

I was silent.

"And that is, man and wife." His voice changed again and shook with conflicting emotions as he quickly continued:

"It's not what I've got to offer you—God knows that's little enough, just an unsoiled name, and a beggarly pittance, and a wrong-headed fool's temper as you've seen."

"Nothing else?" I asked low.

His tone became grave again and penetrating as he answered:

"If you felt as I do you would say that, however we had to battle with the world, it couldn't be so hard but that we could stand it together."

"I am not afraid," I said steadily.

"Not?" he said, with as vivid and eager a delight as though he had not known it beforehand.

"Not with you," I answered tremulously. He did not ask why, as our hands' clasp sealed our confession, nor could I have told him then. I know now.

"Mr. Romney," I said, suddenly starting as if out of a trance, "what will your family say?"

"I don't know; I don't care," he retorted outrageously; then, retracting, "That's not true. I do know; I do care. I've thought it all over. If they knew you they must approve. They don't, so they won't; but it must come all right in due time. It's not what they think that matters first, but what is."

"Will it estrange you from them?" I asked wistfully.

"It may do so."

"Do you know it's a very heavy responsibility you are asking me to accept, together with those other things you mentioned? I don't think it could be right, Mr. Romney, under ordinary circumstances."

But the circumstances were quite extraordinary, we both agreed.

"It will be uphill work," he said. "I wouldn't ask you if I didn't think I could make you happy. Only you must trust me."

I said, "I musn't ask that myself, I suppose, from some one who has shown he can be jealous of a shadow."

"You shall see," he replied.

Again we were silent. I was gladly watching the flit of a butterfly, the daisies that starred the turf, the blue sky piercing the lime foliage, the water-wagtail poised on the rim of the marble basin, as if a new beauty had been breathed into whatever I saw.

"But I can't bear to think of your displeasing your people at home," I told him, struggling with my wicked content.

"If it was all square there," he said like a sage, "I should be too happy. But they'll come round—they must—when they see, and when all the bad things they'll prophesy don't happen."

Fears, doubts, and compunction were all drowned in the overflowing happiness of that hour. But the hour passed; Grandchester was getting up. A gardener had come in and was pulling about a mowing machine. I made Mr. Romney look at his watch and confess it was past nine. I must hasten back to my travelling companion. At the sound of her name he frowned.

"Can't you forgive her now?" I asked him in play.

"Never," he assured me. "I expect she's waiting breakfast for you."

"She never waited a meal for any one in her life," I assured him; "but the train won't wait for us either."

The walk was just three minutes long. We took ten over it. At the street corner a lady passed us, I think on her way to cathedral morning service; there was an instinctive movement of my companion's hand to his hat, checked, as the lady, with deliberation and significance, averted her head and passed on. He exploded with laughter.

"Cut direct," said he. "I dined last week at her house. It's Mrs. Wycherley, one of the society bullies here, you know."

Shocked to see him walking with a young actress, I supposed. "She doesn't know we are engaged," thought I, forgetting that the excuse was worse than the offence.

We parted at the confectioner's door. Annie was in a murderous humour, but throughout our *tête-à-tête* journey I felt I hardly knew crossness from kindness. James Romney was coming up to town to see me to-morrow, to talk over and settle our future plans.

CHAPTER XIX.

A WEDDING AND WEDDING JOURNEY.

NOT a touch of romance about it, oh, no! None of the sumptuous madness of hope, the gorgeous insanity of joy. That is, not then. Still we were a little off our heads, both James Romney and I, at the thought of the wild and unheard-of thing we were going to do. Get married. If he was acting madly, why then so was I, although he only had social position to lose by the step. For his interests were mine now; his sorrows, slights, scrapes, hobbles, debts, difficulties, all involved me. And we were going to marry on nothing at all, was the conclusion he came to, after summing up the particulars of his income—it did not take long. Now don't society and experience unite to tell us what invariably comes of that? Grief.

"Nothing, you call it?" I demurred. "When a workman gets as much you call him insatiate if he thinks that heart of British workman can desire more, to bring up a family upon; nay, prodigal if he can't squeeze out a provision for sickness and old age."

"A British officer's wants are so different," replied James, of course.

"Not so very," I pondered aloud. Really in these days one needs the French philosopher's reminder that, after all, the king can't eat more than his fill, nor have more than one queen. True, James's present professional resources, if by ingenious contrivance made to cover professional expenses, would not have helped much towards our immediate marriage, but for a little windfall lately come to him, which, with strict economy, would tide us over the first years, after which he saw possibilities it rested with him to make certainties of obtaining special duties, bringing extra pay. Altogether it appeared we could count upon a small sum, which, though, as he observed, it wouldn't have kept his brother Willoughby of the —th Lancers for a year in wine and cigars, ought to be enough, so thought I in my simplicity, for two people at starting.

"I promise you, James, we shall manage," I said, "if you'll only promise me one thing—solemnly, mind."

"Name it," said he.

"Not to fret about appearances. I mean, let us take care of things first, and let appearances take care of themselves." Then I drew such a picture of the Dulleys' penurious gentility as made him laugh till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"James," said I another time, partly to tease him, but partly because the obstacles I had made light of at first soon began to trouble me in earnest, and far from dwindling, seemed to grow bigger every day, "how often have I wished for near relations! How glad I am now I have none! You would be ashamed of them."

"Of nothing," he protested, "that belonged to you, Lilla," his name for me now, and ever since.

"Not if they drank?" so I challenged his assertion.

"I'd an uncle who died of old port."

"Or kept a stuffy little shop?"

"I'd pass over that. Trade's getting fashionable now."

"Or neglected their h's? Ah! Caught. Luckily we don't do that in —shire. To the best of my belief I've nothing living nearer than a cousin, who's a corn chandler and doing well. He wouldn't hear of me when I was destitute, so I needn't look him up now. But if once it got wind that I was going to marry into one of the oldest families in Hampshire —"

Here he shut my lips for the time, as he was privileged to do.

We were to be married in six weeks—weeks that I spent in quiet lodgings in Leveson Street, Bloomsbury, hands full with shopping abroad and sewing at home. James came up to see me as often as he dared ask leave of his commanding officer. I saw no one else but counter-keepers and shop-walkers, and Mrs. Hicks, my landlady (Clarendon Hicks she preferred to be called, after a

distinguished connection, she said; others said after the name of an alehouse kept by her late husband), who, not content with the facts of our romance as I stated them, took it into her head that the determined young gentleman who was making this runaway match was a lord's son at the least, an idea of which I but half succeeded in dispossessing her.

I had only two friends to write my news to: Lady Mabel, in Ireland, and Charlotte, somewhere on the wing. From the first there came back the prettiest little note ever received; something to keep like a charm, with a superstitious fancy that the good wishes so enchantingly expressed must have power to bring about their own fulfilment. The single allusion to herself came on the last page.

"John," she wrote, "is unremitting in his care for me. Indeed he troubles himself about my health much more than he need, for I am getting well now, if not very fast. He is taking me to the sea-side for a month by the doctor's advice." They would there be staying with friends, and from thence Mr. Pemberton expected to have to pay a brief business visit to London one week—"your week," as she expressed it. Might he come to the wedding, she asked, and further, might he be allowed to take part—to have the honour of giving away the bride?

"What do you think of that?" I asked James triumphantly next time he came to see me. "You never expected to receive your bride from the hands of a Mr. John Pemberton, who will be a lord if he lives, as Edwin Davenant says. Now did you?"

"Jove, no!" and he laughed. "I wonder, if I were to tell the governor, if he'd come round? I'm afraid, though, he wouldn't think much of a lord who's more than half a Radical, as your Mr. Pemberton seems to be. I'm not sure that I do myself."

"Ah, wait till you make his acquaintance," said I with tranquil superiority.

James persisted in a resolve I thought singular, of only communicating with his family after, or immediately before the event.

"It's not that I'm afraid of the row," he told me. "It wouldn't be the first. But I can't argue with my father. I lose my temper and get the worst of it. Now he might talk himself hoarse, it can make no sort of difference here to what I intend to do. And when the thing's done they won't argue, so no tempers will be lost for nothing. It will save a great waste of powder and shot all round."

From Charlotte came no word of reply to my letter. Could it be that she was acting on the same principle, and, disapproving the step I was taking, preferred holding her tongue to wasting breath in remonstrance?

Then, as the intermediate weeks flew, fatal thoughts came to keep me company, thoughts not to be battled down, as I faced the social campaign he and I had so recklessly resolved on, and all that

it meant or would mean by-and-by, and the almost certainty of our being worsted. I could hear James's friends, when they heard of his wedding, mourning as if over his funeral. I knew just what his messmates' comments would be.

"Married beneath him. Poor devil! Sad thing for his family."

"Ya—as. Drags a fellow down so," tossing off a tenth brandy-and-soda.

"Doosed pretty girl. But——," and then that awful silence which is so much stronger than strong language.

A sense of compunction, dim at first, grew sharper and stronger till it worried me day and night like a kind of mental toothache. "Selfish, low-minded," it cried, "is the girl who accepts a good offer, when the union that is her gain means certain loss to him she loves."

"Not every girl is an heiress," selfish I made haste to retort, "and how many heiresses would look at a penniless subaltern? Worse folly on James's part were he marrying a girl with a couple of hundred a year of her own, and the habit of spending most of it on her dress, a girl who couldn't replace the cook on an emergency, and wouldn't the housemaid. No, I don't see how a young man who wishes to marry young and keep clear of fast company can ask your young lady of fashion unless he's some fortune. I doubt that I am doing his welfare an injury by acceding to his wish."

"Look on," preached conscience, "look on. A really good wife ought to be something more than a pretty girl and a good house-keeper."

She ought, of course, to be something of an intellectual companion. "But is your young-lady wife's outfit of knowledge so very complete?" was my answer to that.

These were mere paper bullets, however, leading up to the final charge.

"You are going," said a voice, "to divorce him from his family, certainly for years, perhaps for ever. Their support, their affection, he forfeits from the day he makes you his wife. A fearful responsibility that, young lady."

It staggered me when I thought of it. For James never pretended not to mind. He swore he knew what he was about, and that sooner or later they would come round, if only he didn't come to them for money. I vowed he never should come upon them for a penny. Still their displeasure was right and reasonable, and there was no reason whatever, that I saw, why they ever should come round. Then Grandchester rose like a scarecrow before my imagination. I saw Mrs. Wycherley gathering in her skirts. I heard the question, "Can we know her?" asked and answered everywhere in the negative. "James, how will you like that?" I steeled myself to ask him. He laughed, but how long would his unconcern be absolute? And the picture of my husband

black-balled just because he was *my* husband kept me awake two nights. When next he came and we talked of this, I managed to say what I wished to, and nearly as quietly as I wished, to give him fair play.

"James, the more I think, the more clearly I see that you will lose much too much by this marriage. It's not money I'm thinking of just now, dear; poor though we should be, I believe there we know what we're doing, and should get the best in that struggle. But suppose, what is quite likely, your world and your family should never take you into favour again. You would feel it more and more, and I couldn't bear to think I was the cause." I stopped; he was listening silently. I forced myself to proceed. "Now, as I wouldn't for the whole world bring any harm to your life, and spoil your chance, I ought to, and I do, say that it's not too late, James, and . . . the best thing to do is . . . to break off . . . and try and get on as well as we can . . . away from each other."

He didn't laugh, or storm, or rave. He just got up and stood in front of me with his hands in his pockets, saying:

"Lilla, are you in earnest?"

"I am."

"Then hark you," he said, "I'm not a lover out of a novel, and I'm not going to swear that if I'd never known you I should never have known luck, but have gone to the devil; but what I do say is, that the day when I met you was the best day of my life, except the day when you promised to be my wife, and the best day of all will be that on which you keep your promise."

"Dear James," said I, the tears foolishly starting to my eyes, "you underrate yourself. That wouldn't sound so bad in a book, you know."

"What has my world, as you call it, ever done for me?" he pursued with obstination. "I may sink or swim, for all the help I shall get there. I fancy my wife will be worth more to me than that."

She might be, that was certain.

"To come to my people," he went on less unconstrainedly, "I don't hit it off with them; I suppose we never shall pull in the same boat together. They've set me down as a lunatic, who'll give them nothing but trouble. I don't think it would break their hearts, Lilla, if they never saw me again."

There I assured him he must be quite wrong. He continued:

"This time the governor has put his foot down; says, 'You've got your start in life; now you must shift, do the best you can for yourself.' That's my affair."

He believed he was doing so now. Forbid it that he should ever find he had deceived himself. That was another affair—and mine.

"If you come to consider," he went on in a lively way, "there's

precious little luck on your side. I'm such a splendid match, Lilla, am I not? There's not a young fellow you'd have met on the boards, doing well there, who couldn't buy me up, times over. I don't command money, I don't command position. The question is, Lilla, what you *are* marrying me for."

That, I pointed out, was my secret, and I meant to keep it.

Well, I must somehow succeed in making this infatuated young man happy, in or out of society, then, if then only, should I feel that my own share of happiness had been fairly come by. Romantic Mrs. Clarendon Hicks was scandalized by our unsentimental talk, did she happen to overhear us discussing the means of making the two ends meet, or the chances of having a single presentable acquaintance in Grandchester. Lovers used to be very different in her time. Certainly we made a point of dwelling chiefly on the rocks ahead, of which we saw plenty. We were going to be so happy in some ways, you see, it seemed natural that we should have to make up for it in others.

The morning was fine; I thanked heaven for that. Before eleven I stood arrayed in my bridal dress of white India muslin, and looking in the glass I thanked heaven again for the smallest of those small mercies for which I had been sometimes ungrateful, whilst laughing at the landlady's immoderate flattery. "Well, miss, you say as he's only a squire's younger son, but I say if he were an emperor's eldest, you're good enough for him." It did not occur to her that you might rather be the wife of a certain young lieutenant than that of the Czar. I brought James neither money nor station, nor influence, nor *chic*, nor elegant accomplishments. It would be very hard, I thought, if I hadn't a straight nose, and roses in my cheeks to bring.

There is a little district church near Leveson Street, Bloomsbury, which might take the prize for ugliness in any competition—a fusty, musty little church, like an unwhited sepulchre. The clergyman, still in the heyday of youth, wore a face of morose austerity, which I daresay hid treasures of benevolence, but hid them very well. He looked sternly at James and at me, as though he were a magistrate, and we prisoners charged before him with an indictable offence. Grim and reprehensive were his questions, meek and tremulous our answers. But whatever might be wanting to the impressiveness of the service we scarcely felt it. We were so dead-determined in our hearts, so convinced in our minds—doubts and hesitations quenched—and by this time so sceptical of any possible happiness worth having apart from each other, that the actual ceremonial was no more exciting than the posting of an important letter already written and sealed up.

A grand wedding followed apace, crowding our party out—all bridesmaids and bouquets, stiff silks, favours, and jewellery; bride in satin, lace, and diamonds; shiny-hatted bridegroom—some favourite of fortune—fortune on the Stock Exchange; files

of carriages, servants, school children scattering flowers—such a *mise en scène* as threw the chief actors into puppet-like insignificance.

"Where are you going to betake yourselves to?" asked John Pemberton, in the vestry, just before we left the church.

Where, indeed? James had suggested Paris, Switzerland, Italy. "Why not take Constantinople and Moscow in, too?" I playfully inquired. "James, dear, sha'n't we keep the Continent in reserve till you're beginning to get tired of me, and my hair's thinking of turning grey, and you're old and gouty? Then we shall have the Alps, German baths, and French shop windows to fall back upon. We should be spendthrifts to launch out into everything all at once. We can't be more than perfectly happy, and just now we should be perfectly happy on Hampstead Heath. James, what say you to the river?"

"You'd like that?" he said eagerly. "Then we'll start from Richmond, and row up in easy stages. I can pull an oar. That was the one feather in my college cap."

To Leveson Street first, for a three-cornered lunch, cleverly provided by Mrs. Hicks, whom John Pemberton's appearance and manner somehow confirmed in her wildest imaginings respecting James' pedigree. I thanked our guest for coming. He had not grown more talkative than formerly, but, far from shunning observation or questions, met them with serenity and assurance. In quiet Mr. John Pemberton there was a reserve force of character which, once roused to assert itself and felt as an influence, might, methought, come to dominate any one who had accepted it as a guide.

Mabel sent her love, he said, and this: a parcel whose gold and pearl contents I was to admire—some other day. It was still early when we parted from our friends, gentle and simple, and started on our drive to Richmond.

It was a Saturday, and road and landscape wore their familiar half-holiday face. Cricket in the fields, cyclists darting along the lanes, spring-carts trundling stout men and wives home from market, school children and infants crowding each cottage doorstep. All the world seemed taking its outing as well as we.

It was growing dusk when we reached the unpretending inn at Richmond James had selected because it was nearest the river. No use to try and look as if we had been married ever so long. The manageress knew directly, as well as we, exactly how long it was since the ceremony had come off. There was no one in the house, she told us; but a party, down for the day and now on the river, had ordered dinner at seven—a noisy lot, she hinted. Should we not prefer to dine quietly by ourselves in the room above? We gave in helplessly, and admitted that we should. Was not the view from that upper balcony far superior to that from the verandah below?

A considerable noise—James said an infernal riot—did go on in that lower room. Had the manageress indiscreetly betrayed that a bridal pair were dining together overhead, thus tempting the mischievous-minded to make this uproar, as the most inappropriate accompaniment to lovers' table talk? Once or twice I had an odd impression as of a familiar sound, but I was so pre-occupied with what James was saying that I paid no heed, and we ceased to regard the ever-increasing hubbub. Sitting over the dessert, we noticed it no more than we might a storm of rain and hail outside, till suddenly there came a rush of feet on the stairs, a bustling, titters, exclamations, whispers, a tearing along the passage; then the door was violently burst open, making us start from our seats.

A tall, lank figure, his head concealed in a woollen shawl, one long arm extended, and with the other dragging the manageress after him, rushed in, she disconcerted, half-laughing, half-breathless, as he went sprawling about, with outstretched hand, tearing round the room like one possessed.

"This gentleman," she gasped out apologetically, "is a thought-reader. He has undertaken to find a pin, hidden in a distant corner of the house; but not here, not here, sir—this is a private dining room; please to come away."

"Keep your thoughts fixed on the pin," shouted the thought-reader, in the well-known accents of Beattie Graves. "You are allowing your mind to wander from the pin, and breaking the conditions on which depends the success of the experiment." And having groped his way hither and thither, and knocked up against James several times, he darted out again, and we heard him careering round the empty rooms above, as we closed the door and gave vent to our amusement, for whilst we had instantly recognized our blindfolded friend, of our identity he was entirely unsuspecting.

From the exclamations on the stairs, we learnt that the thought-reader had triumphantly discovered the pin, stuck in the blind of one of the attics. Followed by an admiring crowd of female domestics, he rejoined his own party downstairs, who, we ascertained by peeping over the verandah, consisted of Charlotte Hope, Edwin Davenant, and Francis Gifford. James said we must present ourselves to our friends, waiting only to think how we could give them surprise for surprise.

He bribed the head waiter to keep us informed of what was passing below. Graves, who was "developing" for the part of a medium in a new spiritualistic extravaganza by Mr. Gifford, was making trial of his powers on the staff of the hotel. A dark *séance* was to come next, and he sent two pressing invitations to the strangers dining upstairs to assist, and witness the manifestations, which would be of a remarkable character.

James' answer, that the lady felt too nervous, after what she

had heard of the gentleman's preternatural exploits, was received with derisive mirth at our expense.

The *séance*, said our reporter, was lively in the extreme. The banjo on the table sprang up and hit Edwin Davenant on the head. A musical box flew like a kite about the room; a blue flame was observed hovering over the head of Francis Gifford, and Charlotte, having wished for a potato, found one presently deposited in her lap. The sofas and chairs next became so excited that the manageress, alarmed for her furniture, begged for the gas to be turned on, which was done, the circle broken, and Graves, the medium, the very same instant fell down flat on the floor in a magnetic sleep, from which he took time to awake. He was now going to proceed to the "materializations." For this purpose he was being sewn up in a sack and deposited behind a screen, whence presently a spirit form would emerge, no more light being admitted than for its outline to be just perceptible. But from this part of the *séance* the underlings were shut out of the room, the door locked, and the key put into the pocket of the manageress, who formed one of the circle seated patient and expectant round the table, with their hands upon it. Presently she inquired how long a time usually elapsed before the apparitions came out.

"Generally about twenty minutes," Gifford explained. "The spirits are Chow, a giant, and Jack, a small boy—Jack the Giant Killer some think, which may be why Chow will never make his appearance together with his fellow spirit."

"Are they coming already?" said Davenant suddenly, in surprise. "I felt a cold wind fanning my hands."

"Impossible, unless the power has enormously increased. We have not sat ten minutes."

"I am sure I felt a hand," said the manageress timidly.

"Large and bony, such as might belong to a giant?" Gifford inquired.

"No, sir; small and soft, like a lady's."

Much puzzled they waited, eager and attentive.

"I was touched," Gifford announced. "It was a man's hand, though; that is certain."

"So was I," rejoined Charlotte simultaneously, "but the hand was a child's or a woman's."

"Can they have actually consented to appear together?" wondered Davenant. "That would be something new."

The circle were deeply stirred, but, faithful to the conditions, sat motionless.

"I see the spirit," cried Charlotte, "standing there opposite! Who is it? Not Chow, nor Jack. It is shorter than the medium by half a head."

The sensation became intense. All eyes were strained, peering hard through the darkness in the direction indicated.

"Mercy on us!" gasped the manageress nervously, in a quavering voice. "I think—now—I see two—two at once."

"Distinctly," rejoined Davenant excitedly. "One form is dark, the other white—dazzling white! There's been nothing like this before."

"Strange," muttered Gifford. "How on earth does the fellow do it? Decidedly there was no one else behind the screen."

A hysterical shriek now broke from the manageress, followed by startled interjections from the practised sitters.

"A third! Why there's a third coming out from behind the screen. Gracious powers, how many more?"

"Confound the conditions!" said Mr. Gifford, springing up to turn on the gas. "In the interests of truth and science let us see what the sorcery is."

What they saw was James and me, standing together, and behind us, protruding from behind the screen, the head and shoulders of the medium, half in and half out of the sack, and more disconcerted than any one by the unaccountable plurality of spirits abroad to-night.

Had we been ghosts indeed the sight of us would hardly have astonished them more. It was, "Bless my soul! Why, Romney? Why, Miss Adams?"

James begged to intimate to them that I was Mrs. Romney now.

When they had got over this second surprise we explained that our mysterious intrusion was no case of matter passing through matter, but of a well-oiled duplicate key, furnished by our accomplice the waiter, and which had enabled us to steal into the room, undetected in the dark.

Spirit-phenomena were forgotten for that night. Graves, exhausted by his mediumistic efforts, seized the excuse to send for champagne and glasses, to toast the bride and bridegroom, after which the gentlemen loitered smoking in the verandah, whilst I talked with Charlotte. My letter had missed her on her travels, and this was the first news she had received of my altered prospects.

"So you are going to settle down in the country," she said oddly, abruptly. "Wonder how you'll take to country society?"

"That may depend," I said, "on how it takes to me."

"It's a toss up," she said moodily. "Any marriage must be. But of course you don't think that now."

I felt huffed by her want of sympathy. "You mean you would have forbidden the banns?"

Her countenance changed. "No, my dear," she said more cordially, "you're out. I know the world as it is, which is not as it looks. It's just a big, vulgar curiosity-shop window, where all the goods try to pass for something that they aren't. Now and again, in the jumble of paste-jewels, tinkered china, and sham

valuables you may hit on a little bit of true metal and sound workmanship, makes no show among the trumpery, is snuffed at and tossed aside. The one who gets it I might perhaps congratulate more heartily on her lot, if I didn't envy it."

"Nay, Charlotte," said I, "you're joking. *You* envy a penniless couple going to set about the humdrum business of life in a dull country town!" She had had a tremendous success in America, and was beginning a brilliant winter season in London.

"Gammon, it sounds like," she confessed, forcing a laugh. "And yet you don't know. And now of course you never will. So much the better for you. Well, it's time we were tramping. Good-bye, child. Don't spoil that young man you've married; there's my last advice. Mr. Romney, do you hear?"

"Good-bye," said Davenant. "So I hear you're quartered at Grandchester. Charming place. Lots of society. Capital shooting on Lord Hazlemere's estate."

"Isn't Colonel Ferrers in command there?" Gifford asked of James. He assented. "He and his wife are old acquaintances of mine. You are fortunate in having her for a neighbour," he added to me thoughtlessly. It was to be feared that Mrs. Ferrers, of whose haughty, high-bred ways James had told me something, would scarcely return the compliment.

James saw our friends on their way to the station, I remaining in the verandah, where a dreamy stillness, broken only by the rippling of the river, had succeeded the commotion and chatter of just now.

Charlotte's first comments, recurring to me as I sat musing, had roused an uneasy, senseless passing desire to see ahead, just some three or four years, and make sure of what they could bring. Well for me I could not. For if some real spirit sorcery had shown me how it would stand with me that day four years, not one of the glad hours that lay between but must have been spoilt, and the very look I cast at James, when I heard his returning footstep behind me, would have been clouded with sadness.

CHAPTER XX.

MY SECOND DÉBUT.

"JAMES," said I, as, a week later, we drove from the station through the town where our home was to be, "how many churches are there in Grandchester, do you know?"

"One for every Sunday in the year, I should say at a guess," my husband replied.

"Happy Grandchester! but oh me, unhappy!" I sighed. "How, James, shall I ever live up to the mark of such a pattern society as this must be?"

"The nearer the church," began James darkly, "the nearer the"

"Ah, James," I caught him up, "you say that to encourage me. I know better. However," I added, to encourage myself, "if they practise what they preach, they should be no respecters of persons, nor mind high things, but put charity first, and readily condescend to those of low estate."

James's countenance was dubious and queer; but cheerful by temperament I clung to these reflections as our fly bumped along the High Street, a streetful of curious antiquities, of which, that afternoon, I saw none. Plenty of shops, and ladies shopping.

"James!" as a carriage drove past with an air of quiet distinction about it and its occupant that I marked at once. "That must be Lady Hazlemere, surely."

He laughed. "Oh, no. Plain Mrs. Bland, of Chrome Hall."

"Plain Mrs. Bland is pretty," I remarked. "Do you know her?"

"I did," said James. "She wanted to book me for one of her eight daughters. A dead failure, Lilla. That's why she gives me the cold shoulder now."

I looked at him tenderly, gratefully, but not to be taken in. If she cut him, it would be because of me. Had we not known it beforehand? James, by this audacious marriage, had parted himself from cultured and refined society to which by birth he belonged.

"Until they come round, James," I asked wistfully, "do you thing you can subsist on Love in a cottage?"

"Love in lodgings in a two-pair back, you mean," he said chuckling.

"Front, James; you said they were front," I eagerly reminded him.

Front they were, and no mistake. At a projecting corner, where five cross streets meet and you nearly get run over, where the shops end and give place to a row of private residences, of graduated gentility, stretching away towards the country, were the rooms he had taken. As a vantage point nothing could be finer. It was the Gibraltar of the High Street. From our sitting-room window we could have bombarded the bank, the cattle-market, and the officers' club. From the upper floor we could see the elms in the Cathedral Close in one direction, and in the opposite, what I liked better, the lime-tops in the Castle Green.

"Here you can watch everything that goes on in Grandchester," James remarked. "It's not much. The first spare day I'll take you for a drive and show you the lions, or, at least, where the lions' dens are."

But it was many days before I had a spare moment in which to distress myself as to what Grandchester would think of me, supposing it gave me a thought. I had to win over Miss Ruck,

our landlady, who, all smiles to James, beheld in me her natural enemy; to educate Gladys, the maid-of-all-work, and, alas, mistress of none; to study, scientifically, the tradespeople of Grandchester, and the art of getting as little cheated as you can without falling down to their own haggling, fleecing level. Church-going hadn't done them much good, I told James, who seemed less surprised to hear it than I was. The baker was piety in person, but his bread was full of alum and plaster of Paris. The grocer was renowned for his liberal charities—he must have cleared the money out of what he saved by adulterating the sugar and tea, and his coffee-beans were certainly mixed. But then he was a Dissenter, and went to chapel. I accounted for his misdoings thus, but James swore that Shoddy, the hosier, a staunch Churchman, was the worst of the lot. I stood up as long as I could for this bulwark of the Establishment, but the leather of his most expensive gloves tore like tissue paper, and in the end I had to give him up. Take one consideration with another, a housewife's lot in Grandchester is not an easy one.

James, meantime, was more than fully occupied at the barracks. An officer, and hard worked? Such was certainly the fact. Besides his own duties, he seemed perpetually acting as deputy for some one else, and studied for future examinations in the evenings. At last he found a leisure afternoon on which to take me for that promised drive. Captain Wellaway, a friend, had lent him his nice-looking trap and horses. As I came out I ran round to pat the creatures' heads, and stood looking at them approvingly, James looking approvingly at me.

"Get in," he said nervously, all of a sudden. "There's Mrs. Wycherley watching us round the corner."

I got in. Accomplished I was not, but I could get into a dog-cart with Mrs. Wycherley, or any lady in Grandchester. Hitherto I had scarcely shown myself out of doors, going round to the shops in the early mornings, otherwise too busy at home. To-day we drove deliberately down the High Street, which was full of people of all sorts and conditions. Charging the enemy, and no mistake. James was only cut six times. "You get used to it," he remarked. "Shall come to like it by-and-by."

But I was grave, and only breathed freely again when we were safe out in the lanes.

"They're an awfully proud lot, these Chalkshire people," said James, smacking his whip viciously. I was feeling very small, and responded with a sigh:

"Ah, shouldn't I be proud too, if, like these people, I came of a long line of ancestors, noble and famous, and lived to sustain the honour of their wealth, power, and repute. James, what *are* you laughing at?"

"I was wondering how many of these good folks came up to your description, that's all."

"Oh, well, there are always some black sheep in every flock," I granted magnanimously. "James, I've always forgotten to ask you, to whom does that large tumble-down old house with the woods behind belong?"

"Moldstone Park. Belonged to Tom Moldstone, last survivor of an old Chalkshire family. Monuments to them all over the cathedral. Mad Moldstone they call him. Poor devil! Got himself head over ears in crazy speculations. Last week he was sold up, and the place has been bought for an orphan asylum."

"Sold up!" I repeated, compassionate, but faintly shocked. "Dear, what a pity!"

Just then an insignificant-looking youth, in close-fitting, ostler-like garments, rode by, and he and James exchanged signs of recognition.

"Who's that little monkey?" I asked innocently.

"Monkey!" James chuckled. "Another bad shot, Lilla. That's Ned Newaker, son of Lady Newaker, of Kingscourt, biggest place about, and the oldest. Dates from Edward I. Best shooting I know."

"I beg his pardon," I apologized humbly. "Pity he doesn't look his aristocratic origin a little better."

"Origin! Good Lord! His father swept out a pawnbroker's shop, saved a bit, speculated in building, made a pot of money, gave some away, and got knighted. His widow took Kingscourt for this boy, who'll have £80,000 a year."

"I see. So of course he associates with none but the great people here."

"They say he prefers boozing in the servants' hall."

"Servants' hall! Well then, anyhow he's not proud, I take it."

"I wouldn't," said James quaintly. "You don't understand these things, Lilla. Well-born they aren't, but when you've got all that money. . . . People here are glad enough to know the Newakers on any terms, so they needn't take the trouble to be civil, and they don't."

"Are all your great people here only mere *parvenus*, James?" I asked. "Where are your county grandees—your good old nobility?"

"Well, there's young Lord St. Osyth, of Swifts' Castle. You know *his* origin."

Yes, I knew. Illustrious, but irregular. James pursued:

"And old Lord Hazlemere, of Archers' Court, own uncle to your Mr. Pemberton. Another queer fish. Doesn't trouble Archers' Court much; there's no racing hereabouts. His first wife was Polly Parrott, the opera-singer, a great favourite in her time."

"Was she received in society here, I wonder?" I asked with real curiosity.

"Grandchester would have received her with open arms," he said, "had she lived to come to the title. But you don't suppose

the Hazlemeres, when they are down, visit any one here but the Newakers and one or two more."

I rubbed my eyes; I was getting mixed.

"Now we come to station and respectability combined," said James, pointing with his whip to a picturesque grey house on a height amid park land. "That's Chrome Hall. Mr. Bland, parson and squire of Chrome. He and his wife lead the fashion here. Lots of daughters to marry off; pleasant place—pleasant people; quite the top of our little tree."

"Mr. and Mrs. Bland," I repeated. "An old county family like yours, I suppose?"

"Hum! His late father, the bishop, was the son of a Bristol hosier, everybody knows."

"Come, only a tradesman," said I, brightening; "that's not so very aristocratic."

"Aristocratic, indeed!" said James loftily. "The bishop's widow's still living, in the house on the opposite hill. She was a governess."

"Governess," I said delighted. "And they visit her?"

"If she gives them the chance," said James. "But no airs like her airs, Lilla—in Grandchester we call her 'The Dowager.' Over there you see the trees of Sir Miles Husk's park—quite the oldest representative of our county families."

"Does he live there? Are they nice people?" I asked.

James growled, and continued—"The deuce knows where his money went, but the old sinner's as poor as a rat now, lives over at Sandy Point with his four elderly daughters, whom he keeps like a jailer. His poor son ran away with the cook and married her."

"James," said I thoughtfully, "do you know they seem to me a very odd lot, your best families, very mixed. Bad's the best, from your own account."

"Oh, that's nothing," said James carelessly. "Further on is Lord St. Osyth's—as nice a young fellow as ever rode to hunt, drinking himself to death as fast as he can. His cousin, Hazlemere's son, had the start of him, and has done it already. Then there's Sir Charles Downhill, whose ancestors were lords of the soil here when St. Osyth and Hazlemere's fathers were tilling it. People don't visit *him*. He did for himself long ago, with debt and drink and strange company. Then there's——"

"James, James," I cried, stopping my ears, "I'll hear no more, I vow. That's enough for one day." He laughed till he could scarcely hold the reins. "You don't suppose they're worse than other sets."

"I don't," said I. "But if they're no better, why, I ask you, are they so proud?"

"You may say so!" said he. "I've often asked myself."

It was nice to be able to prove how absurd it was, but so far as we were concerned it came to precisely the same thing in the

end. It might be unreasonable in the near connections of Polly Parrott, of Drury Lane Theatre, of the hosier, the pawnbroker, and the cook to excommunicate James, because he had married a girl of no station; but what mattered to us was the fact, not the reasons, good or bad.

More serious, however, than the avoidance shown us by people in general were the advances made us by certain people in particular which must somehow be parried. There was Mrs. Titteridge, a grass widow, who painted, and smoked cigarettes with the officers, and who had been "dropped," not quite on that account, but since it had transpired that there was another side to the tale of her matrimonial wrongs, which she was so ready to pour into the first stranger's ear, and wherewith Grandchester had been taken in at first. There was Mrs. Major Dashett, poor thing, who certainly drank, and Captain and Mrs. Towsell, whose vulgarity was past all belief. All these I found quite superior to prejudice, and ready to rush straight into my arms, but James was peremptory on this point. "I can't have you associate with these people. If only on account of Mrs. Dashett and Mrs. Towsell I wouldn't have rooms in barracks. The people I want you to know would never come near us if they could help it, and the wrong ones would be popping in and out all day like rabbits in a warren."

James's personal friends among the unmarried officers were as nice and kind as could be, and came often to spend the evenings with us—Major Rubicund, Captain Wellaway and Charlie Mayfly, neither wits nor paragons, granted, but perfectly friendly, and appearing to like my society. A pleasure, and such a relief—Mr. Mayfly innocently let out once—to have a lady friend you can't by possibility be supposed to want to marry. The young gentleman had expectations. Like your self-conceit, I told him; for really the way in which you men take for granted every girl would like to marry you! And yet I couldn't doubt that many of these girls would have liked to have married my James.

Major Rubicund, fat, florid and fifty, nearly, and supposed to have had a jolly half century of it, yet cared to make himself at home with us. Finally Captain Wellaway, who, with six thousand a year and attractive, had succeeded, at thirty, in stamping himself as "not a marrying man" (worth more to him, he declared, than a decoration), came oftener than any of the others.

For female society I was thrown back on Gladys, who was developing slowly, under my incessant superintendence. James's former Grandchester acquaintance would not know me. The married officers held aloof, because of their wives. A man must take the consequences if he marries a ballet girl, as the story went that I was. So far as the ladies—here the governing classes—were concerned, I was as completely ignored as though I had been invisible.

One morning I was busy with the sewing machine, when, towards 12.30—half-an-hour earlier than usual—in marched James from the barracks, with a look I thought I understood too well. Up I stood, startled.

"James, don't tell me, you've asked somebody to lunch?"

"How did you know that?" he inquired, taken aback.

"I know," said I, "because there's only the cold mutton. Why does it always happen on the cold-mutton days?" Yesterday there would have been an excellent beef-steak. Provoking, to a saint!

"I told him," said James, "and he swore it was his favourite dish!"

"You may as well tell me who it is," said I resignedly. "Captain Wellaway, I suppose"—he was the grandest, and the greatest epicure among our acquaintance.

"No—guess."

"Couldn't."

"Francis Gifford—come down to stay with the Ferrerses. Lilla, how grave you look."

"It's not that, James," said I laughing. "Still, Francis Gifford is not the sort of person one cares to treat to cold mutton. If it had been Major Rubicund, now, I shouldn't have minded."

Why one should mind I cannot tell, but there are people like that—men and women. All through life they go, getting the white of the chicken pressed upon their acceptance. Small wonder if they come to look on it as their due.

"Send round to the confectioner's for what's wanted," said James, "or if you're busy I'll call in there myself."

"No, no, I'll go," I said with alacrity. Doth not the High Street tradesman depend for his best profits on the ignorance and amiability of the male sex? That confectioner would prove that James had warranted her in despatching all the contents of her shop, and getting rid of her skinniest fowls and stalest cakes at a premium.

Your household fairy extemporizes a repast at a moment's notice, without expense. It's a legend. I own I don't know how she does it. The boiler was being cleaned; there was nothing for it but the confectioner's. But careful and troubled though I had been about the lunch beforehand, I forgot these sordid misgivings when once it was begun. Our guest made himself so entertaining that James and I agreed afterwards we should not have known whether we were eating cold mutton or ortolans. We enjoyed whatever it was. Gifford told stories of the American tour. I think he had spent the voyage back in inventing them. How Annie Torrens had been "interviewed" in New York by her own husband, without recognizing him. How Tomkins, in the guise of a reporter, had been treated to the tale of her matrimonial wrongs, till he threw off his *incognito*, and there was a scene.

How, it having transpired that Tomkins the Unlucky had just enriched himself by a fortunate speculation, it ended in a reconciliation, and Annie was talking of a farewell tour previous to retiring from the stage. How Miss Hope had performed to a tribe of Indians in a barn, and vowed she had never had an audience so thoroughly to her liking. How Edwin Davenant had gone hunting American heiresses and been all but captured by an English adventuress. As for Beattie Graves, have not his experiences, amazing exceedingly, been since given forth to a wondering world, in print?

The clock striking, tardily reminded James he must post off to the barracks forthwith. There was no occasion for Mr. Gifford to hurry—he never did. If he had been carrying a reprieve behind time I don't think he could have brought himself to it. He stayed talking, and in answer to his questions about Grandchester and ourselves I candidly told him of the social "no thoroughfare" that met us on every side and how it distressed me on James's account, although he bore it so beautifully. When I praised my husband's cheerful patience, Mr. Gifford only laughed. It was I, he seemed to think, who must find the position so trying. Now I really hadn't suffered from it at all, as I told him. "You see," I added, "I have never had the chance of acquiring a taste for general society. On the stage I was too hard-worked, and at Dene Abbey I saw nobody."

I had made the allusion involuntarily. Not but what his presence necessarily called up certain strange memories—nay, the idea that his purpose in staying on must be to draw from me some mention of Lady Mabel was strong in my mind. Yet, glancing up, I was made aware I was mistaken. Dene Abbey was not in his thoughts just then. But he betrayed no sign of resenting the reminder. After a moment's hesitation, he said:

"I understand you stayed there some time."

"I stayed till the establishment was broken up," I told him. "The Duchess was exceedingly kind to me, Lady Mabel also."

"I knew Lady Mabel first," he said by-and-by, "when she was a child of seventeen."

"She told me," I answered, "the story of her life, Mr. Gifford."

"How was she," he asked, after a pause, "when she left England?"

"I thought," said I, "that she was a little less unhappy; I could not be sure. But that she has become so since," I added, "I am quite sure."

"You are probably right," he said definitely, incisively, distantly. "I am glad it is so."

Glad—yes—that it was not in vain that she had stopped short of the utter shipwreck of her life, to the verge of which she had been led by his instigation. Yet she had not escaped his secret contempt by her retraction. Clearly she was not a woman to

lay down everything for a man, and be happy after all, dying at his feet, regarding her destiny as accomplished. She—fate, at all events—having willed otherwise, his look, his tone implied a desire to banish that passage to a remote past, and view it almost as a previous stage of existence.

He stayed talking of other things till James came in; then left me half-puzzled, half-pleased, and inclining myself to view that past less severely perhaps than I should. No doubt he had been seriously impressed by Lady Mabel's unhappy position, perhaps misled by her impressionability. Nothing of course could be more selfish and wrong than to take advantage of these under false colours of generosity and friendship. But when, since the world began, has it been otherwise? Men unselfish, constant, and strictly conscientious? Why, if they were, the whole structure of society would be overturned and have to be built up again on totally fresh foundations, whether for the better or for the worse ask not me, but some one competent to determine. So thought I, whilst preparing to go out with James, when the latter began with mystery:

"I've something to tell you, Lilla."

"Say on," said I, arranging my bonnet.

"Mrs. Ferrers"—at the name of the commandant's wife, the Hon. Mrs. Ferrers, Mrs. Ferrers the handsome, the haughty, the exclusive, I stopped short—"has been asking about you."

"About me?"

"Whether you would recite at the Penny Reading for the soldiers and their wives to-morrow night. The chaplain and Mrs. Ferrers get it up. Seems that Gifford's been talking about you. Anyhow that's what she tried to find out."

"And what did you say, James?" I asked, disguising my fears lest he should have been over obliging, or perhaps too proud and huffy.

"I said I had no objection to her asking you."

"What a thing it is to have Discretion for a husband," said I approvingly, and James tried not to look conceited. "Well, perhaps she'll think better of it," I added, and we went off for our walk.

But on our return we found Mrs. Ferrers's card and ever such a note. "When these great people want something of you, Lord, how civil they can be!" It was not I who said that, it was James who said it for me. "'A little entertainment for the men and their wives,'" I read out, and stopped there to ask:

"Why do they always call the soldiers 'men' in distinction from the officers?"

"I suppose we are not men yet, only monkeys," said James, whose recent studies included Darwin.

"The men and their wives." Would I be so very kind as to etcetera, etcetera. "Shall I be so very kind as to etcetera, etcetera?" I asked of James.

"I wish you to do as you like," answered that man of men. And he meant it too, which is quite another thing.

"Then I think, James, I'll not begin by giving myself airs."

"Right you are," he responded. So I wrote back to say how happy I should be to etcetera, etcetera, and was put down to recite "Lucy Gray." Mr. Gifford had promised to read *The Trial*, from "Pickwick," and James to perform upon several instruments. The entertainment, which was mostly not above the level of a music-hall, was largely patronized by the gentry about, whose tastes it hit to a nicety. Tamburlane the Grandiloquent goes down best in a booth. For "Come to your Martha" and the "Chickeleery Cove" what circle in the land can be too high? It was my first appearance in Grandchester society, and so flustered me that I declare I never knew what it was to be nervous before.

"What shall I wear?" I asked of my husband.

"White," he said. "Nothing looks so well on a platform."

He was right, as usual. There was no time to order a new dress—a frantic piece of extravagance fortunately thus put out of the question.

"What an age you are dressing to-night," said James, at a quarter to eight on the evening; and I couldn't deny it—I, who at the theatre had learnt to change from anything into anything in ten minutes. But to-night the threads broke, and the hairpins worked their way out.

"Shall I do?" I asked as I came forth.

"Pretty fair," said James like a judge, clasping Lady Mabel's pearl ornament round my neck. "There, come on, we shall be late."

He was nervous, I saw, which made me a thousand times more so. A phalanx of officers received us. James's friends, ever staunch, formed a guard of honour round his wife. Had I been Mrs. Bland, of Chrome Hall, or "the Dowager" herself, I could not have been better attended. The perfection of shirt collars compassed me on all sides; the neatest trimmed heads, the most faultlessly-cut clothes, and a promising nursery garden of moustachios formed my escort to my place in the front row, between James and Francis Gifford.

"God has made men easily amused," whispered the latter to me presently, as the amateur Christies of the garrison proceeded to convulse the audience by some dismal attempts at jocularity in nigger melodies. A comic song, "The Lodging House Cat," was sentimentally sung by the chaplain; the sentimental ditty, "Bendameer's Stream," well shouted, as behoves the British dragoon, by Captain Startup. Then Captain Startup's wife brought down the house with "Baby's Lullaby." Her strong contralto rang through the gymnasium powerfully enough to waken all the babies in Grandchester. Mr. Gifford read his Dickens so cleverly that those present who had heard Dickens

himself declared the present reader superior. Then came my turn, and I trembled—who had been a year on the stage—trembled like a young lady about to uplift her singing voice for the first time at a party.

The soldiers, among whom James was extremely popular, gave me a muscular reception that would have put heart into a hare, and I set off, only distracted by the audible remarks dropped from time to time by the ladies in front, as though the gap between stalls and platform were real, and not theoretical.

"So simple and natural," observes Mrs. Bland to Mrs. Ferrers distinctly. "Except that she walks and holds herself so well you would never guess she had been on the stage."

"Lucy Gray" was tremendously applauded—*encored*. Of course I declined. "As well *encore* Ophelia's mad scene," I remarked to Mr. Gifford, who assured me he had known audiences re-demand it.

After the performance, as we were preparing to take leave, Mrs. Ferrers pressed us to join her party and come on to supper at the Commandant's quarters. Of course we accepted, and I did it quite naturally too, and just as if I wasn't a bit elated. So instead of going home to a cheery chatty supper with our own little set, we were marched across the barrack-square to the Colonel's house, where I had to stand fire for another hour. I was stared at pretty hard, but I felt I was making progress in private opinion, and several of the officers came up and introduced their wives. I tried not to disgrace James, or make the fact of his *mésalliance* too painfully obtrusive. But I was beset by dilemmas. If I avoided the subject of actors and acting, it was affectation. If I dwelt upon it, that was theatrical. If I was silent, I was boorish; if talkative, forward. That Colonel Ferrers was the perfection of gallant courtesy counted for nothing. He was of those men who cannot give a penny to a beggar, of the other sex, without the air of one receiving a favour. But his wife had marked me out for her approval, freely and distinctly. It was Gifford's doing, said James, and there was no doubt that it was. I had made my *début*, and it had been successful.

After that our social advance among the profession was steady. Only Mrs. Startup, whose life-aim was to hold her head even higher than Mrs. Ferrers, and who could hardly be expected to forego the present opportunity, declined my acquaintance. But the Grandchester residents had not relaxed one inch. What, to them, were the military, from the least to the greatest? Mere jetsam and flotsam. Their patronage counted for nothing with town or country, who stoutly refused to know more of us than at first. James said it was the thin edge of the wedge got in; but if so our case was indeed hopeless, for the wedge stuck there. Mrs. Wycherley still refused to sit next me in church, and soundly rated the verger for once placing me in the pew with her daughter.

Mrs. Martinette, the senior canon's wife, still reported, and may have believed, that I had danced at the opera. The chaplain of the forces, from the day of the Penny Reading, stood my friend, espoused my cause staunchly on all occasions, and contradicted false reports; but he only succeeded in getting himself into hot water. For a single man he may have defended me with too much zeal; and Mrs. Wycherley, who had set her heart on him for one of her daughters, was confirmed in her opinion of me as an artful minx, and denounced my champion as entangled in Jezebel's toils.

From James's relations all this long while came no word. But one day my heart leapt up at the sight of a letter in the hand of his favourite brother, Willoughby. If one began relenting the others would follow, thought I, watching James anxiously as he read.

"What does he say?" I asked at last, eager and tremulous.

"He says," replied James, "that he's run into a corner, and wants to know if I can lend him ten pound."

(To be continued.)

A CASTLE IN SPAIN.

"In distant land, where ye can never enter,
A castle stands, the Monsalvat its name;
A radiant temple rises from its centre,
More glorious far than aught of earthly fame."

CASTLE-BUILDING will always be a favourite relaxation from the routine of our work-a-day life. Nature evidently intends that it should be so when she paints these pictures in the clouds, that pass from day to day in ever-changing form and beauty silently before us. As we gaze upon some "*fancy in nubibus*" Thomson's famous castle comes to mind; you remember his description:

"A pleasing land of drowsihead it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
For ever flushing round a summer sky."

It was this land and its castles that Spenser "the Muse's page of state," had discovered long before:

"Whose double gates he findeth locked fast,
The one faire fram'd of burnisht Yvory,
The other all with silver overcast."

And lest we were in doubt where this fair land might be, a still earlier poet writing in the eleventh century has told us:

"Fur in see bi west Spaygne
Is a lond ihote Cokaygne."

Whether the rhyme suggested the situation or not, it is curious to note that even in that remote age the fabled land of luxury and indolence had become associated with Spain, and that now "a castle in Spain" is synonymous with "a castle in the air."

My castle, however, is at once a castle in the air, and a veritable *château d'Espagne* built of stone and lime. Had I the magic carpet of Arabian story, I should like to transport you to it, for under the cloudless skies of Andalusia its domes and minarets, turrets and towers still point towards the summer sun. Looking from its height the eye can scarce distinguish where the walls end and the rocky foundations begin. It is situated on a spur

of the Sierra di Ronda, yet completely isolated by rocky ravines; and as you ascend to where the horse-shoe arches frown down upon you as they leap from crag to crag, you are reminded of that mysterious castle which was said to be somewhere in Spain before it was transplanted to the fabled dominions of Prester-John in Central Asia—the castle of the Holy Grail.

But my castle is not so inaccessible as Monsalvat, for there, twenty miles or so down the green vega, past vineries and olive gardens, stands Gibraltar, glorious to our English eyes, while still further south across the silver streak of sunlit sea the horizon is bounded by the legendary mountains of North Africa. Many a time in Spanish-Arabian days has some dark-eyed Sobeiha, with her arabesque embroideries of scarlet and gold, watched for the glittering lances and the golden crescent on its azure ground, as the expected troupe of Moorish horsemen turned that corner of the defile and swept into view before they began the toilsome ascent that leads to the castle gates. These days are long since past, but amid the surrounding silence they sometimes seem very near as you sit on this terrace thinking of the "long glories" of the Moors. These calm evenings in my Andalusian retreat are like oases full of rich and pleasing memories. With relics of a romantic past all around, it requires little imagination to hear in the tinkle of the bells in the village beneath, the far-off sound of Moorish cymbal or horn, or the musical tones of the muezzin's cry; and as you turn from gazing on the Mediterranean and re-ascend the castle slopes, the broken arches are touched by a magic hand, the colonnades of sculptured pillars with their graceful traceries of vines, roses, and lilies support once more the vaulted roof of sapphires glistening with moving stars. My chateau is once more the castle of the Grail, the legendary Monsalvat.

The story of the Holy Grail is not Spanish as the legends of Don Roderick or the Cid are Spanish, but it has somehow everlastingly associated itself with my "castle in Spain." Perhaps the fact that it was there I first read the legend has something to do with this, apart from its fanciful resemblance to Monsalvat. The authors of this grand old twelfth-century epic were two French *trouvères*, Guyot and Chrétien de Troyes, and two German *minnesingers*, Wolfram of Eschenbach and Albrecht of Schaffenberg, yet it has more to do with Spain than is at first apparent. The *minnesingers* received the myth from the Provençal Guyot, whose long residence in Toledo (somewhere between 1160 and 1180 A.D.) made him acquainted with the popular traditions and Oriental literature of the Spanish-Arabians. Spain became the *locus* of the castle of the Grail, and its guardians married princesses of Spain and sultanas of Granada. Among the Arabian rolls Guyot may have read of the golden cup of the Persian Jamschid which contained the elixir of life; and of that enchanted castle built by the *Peris* "in the remote mountains of

Spain," whose gates were bolted with dragons' teeth, and which no one could open :

"Till Destiny shall have consigned the key to his adventurous hand."

In the English romance of Sir Thomas Malory the Holy Grail is always in the far distance, and those of Arthur's knights who went upon its quest but followed "wandering fires, lost in the quagmire." The heroes of the Mort' Arthur are all save Sir Gala-had outside its pale, but in the German legend we are taken within the gates of that wondrous castle where the mysterious cup was concealed. It is Wolfram of Eschenberg who tells us of the "castle in Spain," hid among inaccessible mountains and dark pathless forests, of the lone lake nestling beneath its towers, and reflecting the ruby and the crystal cross, and the golden eagle which topped the topmost tower of that fair temple, built by unseen hands. In his wondrous story we hear the choir of angels join with Templar knights and priests in singing at its consecration that hymn of hymns, "Glory to God on high, peace on earth, goodwill to men." How often in the old romances do you trace the monkish pen. The master-minds that conceived our grand mediæval cathedrals, that sculptured their traceries, and painted the emblazonries on their windows, were at work here in depicting this castle of the Grail. It is in true Gothic spirit. Its turrets, its sapphire dome, and sculptured pillars are but transcripts from the cathedrals, which were then rising up all over Christendom.

The romance itself was worthy of its glorious setting. The Holy Grail, we are told, "was like a cup of emerald-coloured jasper, encircled by a stand of chased gold." It was :

"The cup, the cup itself, from which our Lord
Drank at the last sad supper with His own.
This, from the blessed land of Aromat—
After the day of darkness, when the dead
Went wandering o'er Moriah—the good saint,
Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.
And there awhile it bode; and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at once
By faith, of all his ills. But then the times
Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to heaven, and disappear'd."

This is Tennyson's beautiful paraphrase of Walter Mape's English version of the story. Turning now to Wolfram's version, we find that at last there was born one who by his good and noble deeds was worthy of becoming guardian of the Grail. Sir Titurel was called by a heavenly messenger to "set his house in order," and come to holy Monsalvat. When the temple was built as described, Titurel became king of the Grail and reigned for four

hundred years, his life having been miraculously prolonged by the strengthening power of the Grail, which was renewed every year by a dove from heaven. Then there came a time when a later king of the Grail, Amfortas, grandson to Titurel, was not so spotless as Titurel had been, and as a punishment he was troubled with a painful lance-wound which could not be cured till one purer than he should come to Monsalvat. Meanwhile a knight, Sir Percival by name, was riding through all the forests of Spain, searching for the castle of the Grail. He was the son of Herzeleide, the sister of Amfortas, and great-grandson of the first king, Sir Titurel, who was still alive. Once Sir Percival came to Monsalvat, where he had been long expected by the suffering Amfortas, but his time had not yet come. Like King Robert of Sicily he lacked humility. 'Twas that which had hitherto hindered his quest. Weary days of wandering these were before he again stumbled on the rugged pathway that led up to Monsalvat. At last, when he had sought the Holy Grail with a pure heart and humble mind, he was guided back to Monsalvat. He had been riding all day through forest and moorland, and in the evening came upon a lonely mountain lake. Looking up, he saw the dim towers of Monsalvat looming out against the shadowy amphitheatre of hills beyond, softened in the twilight. Leading his horse up the steep ascent, he reached the courtyard of the castle, where he was received by retainers, who seemed to expect him, some taking his horse, and others leading him to the great hall.

Beneath the sapphire dome of the temple of the Grail he found as before the four hundred Templar knights praying round the altar for the advent of the king, who was to restore Amfortas and awake the slumbering virtues of the Grail. As Sir Percival entered the knights rose from their knees, whilst Amfortas gazed wistfully at the expected deliverer. A squire then approached the altar with the bleeding lance which had wounded their king, followed by the virgin queen of the Grail, Repause, and her retinue of maidens, bearing the sacred cup. After silent prayer, Sir Percival asks what the strange and impressive ceremonial means. This was the long-expected signal of the deliverance of Amfortas, and installation of his successor. Percival had no sooner obeyed the Divine injunction to "ask" than the Grail sent out its rosy radiance through the colonnades:

"Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive
Till all the white walls . . . were dyed
With rosy colours leaping on the wall ;"

and the voices of the angelic choir, hushed for centuries on Holy Monsalvat, bursts into song :

"Hail to thee, Percival, king of the Grail!
Seemingly lost for ever,

A Castle in Spain.

Now thou art blessed for ever,
Hail to thee, Percival, king of the Grail!"

"O never harp nor horn
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with hand
Was like that music as it came!"

Many were the changes occasioned by the return of Percival to Monsalvat. The Grail, which in letters of fire had proclaimed his kingship, continued to shine in all its pristine splendour. The deposed Amfortas was restored to health. The venerable Titurël, after crowning Percival, like another Simeon, prayed before the sacred vessel, left the temple, and was seen no more. Percival's queen, Konduiramour, who had seen so little of him during all his wanderings, came to Monsalvat, to share the honours and the calm of the holy mountain. For a generation longer the sacred cup remained in Europe, and then because of the sinful times the castle of Monsalvat was transported through the air in a night to Central Asia, where after Percival's death the brotherhood of Prester-John, or John the Priest, perpetuated the stately ritual of the Grail. Thus it was that Arthur's knights searched in vain for the holy cup. It was henceforth to be shrouded in that gorgeous yet mysterious region of the definite—the far East. So ended the dream of "a castle in Spain."

How interesting it is in these old romaunts to trace the feelings of the times in which they are written. In those days he who was ambitious must climb the ladder of fame either as a churchman or a soldier. The crown and the mitre were the semblances of mediæval authority, and accordingly it was the aim of the ecclesiastics who penned or transcribed the romances to create a new order of priest-knights, who would be warriors strong and courageous, and at the same time pure as the best of those who wore the orders of the Church. Such were the men whom Walter Mapes gathered around Arthur's court at Camelot. Such was Arthur himself, and what Henry the Second's chaplain did for the Arthur myth, Wolfram of Bavaria did for the adopted court-heroes of Germany. In the romances can be traced three stages of development—first the facts; then the story embellished by tradition as it was handed down from minstrel to minstrel; and lastly, its third stage, that of being a personification of the author's or the nation's ideal of a perfect knighthood or society. It was the introduction of the legend of the Holy Grail which gradually produced this last stage. The ideal knight, hitherto with no higher object than the freeing of ladies from enchanted castles or the slaying of dragons, was, by the introduction of the Grail myth, brought face to face with a newer and loftier conception. The Grail was at first only a symbol of salvation, before it became in later romances the actual cup used at the Last Supper of our Lord; and in the same way the bleeding lance which figures in

the Grail ceremonials at Monsalvat was originally a lance which by miraculous power bled to remind its owner of some deed of blood unavenged till it became idealized into the spear which pierced the Saviour's side.

But we have wandered far from my castle in Spain, and as the legendary train of Templar knights sink with the sun behind the sierra, it seems as if the gates of Paradise had rolled back upon their "living hinges," for the Grail music ceases, the rosy light from the sacred cup fades away, Percival and his brotherhood vanish, and an involuntary shudder reminds me that the night is cold, and that I am alone amidst the ghostly ruins of the old Moorish fortress. Half an hour's walk will bring me to the village, but I am unwilling to leave this happy hunting-ground of thought, even when aware of the trouble it will cost me to scramble down that rock-bestrewn pathway which serves as a road. As long as the daylight lingers upon the mountain tops this spot is enchanting. In the east I can see the Mediterranean like a silver shadow, die away into the far horizon, to wash the shores where other "castles in Spain," the ruined palaces of Semiramis, Zenobia, and Cleopatra, lie in broken heaps among their tomb-like mounds of sand; whilst from the opposite shores of Carthage there comes a wail as if Dido were still waving her willow, this time over Spain; and away still further to the south:

"Love's planet rises yonder silent over Africa."

ARTHUR GRANT.

THE GREAT MYSTERY:

A GREEK AND CHRISTIAN CHORUS.

PART I.

CHORUS OF GREEK MAIDENS.

What is Death ?

Whispered all in accents low,
When the days have lost their glow,
And the hours like flowers uprooted,
Now no longer rosy-footed,
Big with heavy burdens grow.
This is Death.

What is Death ?

Muttered in unwilling ears,
With a trembling as of tears,
By the passing of the story
Of this gladsome summer glory,
By the coming in of fears.
This is Death.

What is Death ?

Murmured on the busy mart,
By a sickening of the heart,
In a rising up of terrors,
As the ghost of all our errors,
When the actor drops his part.
This is Death.

What is Death ?

When the river on its course,
Feels a sinking at the source,
Dimly desperately boded
By the hopeless spirit, goaded
With the gadfly * of remorse.
This is Death.

* Οίστρον γάτος.

What is Death?
Ask it of the gods, whose spells
Once made splendid woods and wells,
Now departing with a weeping
From the shrines they had in keeping,
From the shadowed rocks and dells.
This is Death.

What is Death?
Darkness to be felt, that drapes
All the bright and beauteous shapes,
Wrought by fancy or by Nature,
Raised by Art to nobler stature,
Darkness from which none escapes,
This is Death.

What is Death?
See it, when the light is brief,
In the yellow falling leaf,
In the misting of the mountains,
In the poisoning of the fountains,
And the shadow on the sheaf.
This is Death.

What is Death?
Taste it, in the troubled hour
Of the sweetness rendered sour,
By the touch of frosty fingers
Laid upon the charm that lingers,
Loath to leave the Dryad's bower.
This is Death.

What is Death?
Feel it in the drawing near
Of a presence dark and drear,
Over every bud and blossom,
Into even the throbbing bosom,
Piercing like a foeman's spear.
This is Death.

What is Death?
Hear it, in the broken strain,
Like the sough of autumn rain;

The Great Mystery.

In the wailing voice of sorrow,
Crying that there is no morrow,
For the gathering of the grain.
This is Death.

What is Death?
In the breaking of the bond,
Long so tender and so fond,
When the sacred friendships sever,
That must part, and part for ever,
To the shades that loom beyond,
This is Death.

What is Death?
It is only whispered here,
But the winter, sad and sere,
Finds its footprints in the turning
Of the blooms with sunshine burning,
On the meadows, by the mere.
This is Death.

What is Death?
Though we trick our rose, at will,
Trusting to avert the ill,
In the veil of fair disguises,
Yet too soon, with grim surprises,
Lo, the worm defies us still!
This is Death.

What is Death?
It is known by many a name,
Some of terror, some of shame,
Thundered forth in battle schisms,
Sighed with gentle euphemisms,
But its sentence is the same.
This is Death.

What is Death?
Other evils have their sting,
This alone is truly king,
For it is the end of pleasure,
End of every earthly treasure,
And of every living thing.
This is Death.

PART II.

CHORUS OF CHRISTIAN MAIDENS.

What is Death ?

Hope, by happy sufferers named,
Wherewith pictured life is framed,
 Surging round us with its billows,
 Softer than all earthly pillows,
Hope that maketh not ashamed.
 This is Death.

What is Death ?

Comfort for the pangs that press,
Rainbow over stormy stress,
 Bright and blessed expectation
 Of the glorious transformation
Which awaits our mortal dress.
 This is Death.

What is Death ?

Dawn that guides the faithful path,
Dawn no pagan pilgrim hath,
 For the soldier in his tourney,
 For the traveller on his journey,
Beaconing through the night of wrath.
 This is Death.

What is Death ?

Light for every upturned mind
When the outward eye is blind,
 Over earth, with evil hoary,
 Streaming from the gates of glory
On the chains that cannot bind.
 This is Death.

What is Death ?

Not a sinking in the tide,
But a purging of our pride ;
 Not a failing or miscarriage,
 But a high and holy marriage,
When the Bridegroom takes the Bride.
 This is Death.

The Great Mystery.

What is Death ?

Not a stumbling of the feet,
Not a parting ne'er to meet,
But a grand reunion's token
For the friendships, only broken
To be made for ever sweet.
This is Death.

What is Death ?

Not an unsurmounted bar
To a vision fair and far,
But a stepping-stone uplifting,
Though it be through weary sifting,
To the bright and morning star.
This is Death.

What is Death ?

End of trouble, end of toil,
Woven like a serpent's coil
Round the lives of man and maiden ;
Resting for the heavy-laden ;
Cleansing for the clinging soil.
This is Death.

What is Death ?

End of every damning vice,
Bought at a tremendous price—
Like a sanctuary solemn,
Calm with many a storied column—
Bought by God's own sacrifice.
This is Death.

What is Death ?

Starting-point for purer strife,
Striven without the blood-stained knife,
End of sorrow, end of sinning,
Bright and yet more bright beginning
To a new and nobler life.
This is Death.

What is Death ?

But a bridge-way to the shore,
But the opening of a door,

When this sad and suffering mortal
Bursts its wretched prison portal,
That shall hold it nevermore.
This is Death.

What is Death ?
Treading, where the Conqueror trod,
On the tyrant's broken rod,
With earth's loving latest blessing
And Heaven's tender first caressing—
Yea, it is the kiss of God.
This is Death.

What is Death ?
As the shadows rise and flee,
And the eyelids ope to see,
It is life itself, eternal,
Breathing from the fount supernal
When the soul begins to be.
This is Death.

PICTURES OF LIFE IN BAVARIA'S ALPS.

AT the Fine Art Society's rooms in New Bond Street we have had on view some fifty oil, water colour, and black and white sketches and paintings, from the brush of Mr. Hubert Herkomer, A.R.A., the result of his summer holiday among the Bavarian Alps, a district fondly loved by him, and which has often inspired him with themes. In exhibiting under the title of "Life and Work in Bavaria's Alps," a number of works all dealing with the same subject, Mr. Herkomer follows an example hitherto only set by that most original of painters, the Russian, Basil Vereschagin. The idea is entirely laudable. By keeping the attention of the spectator fixed upon one set of ideas it is intensified, and his interest in the theme presented is saved from being distracted. For the purposes of a pictorial cycle the Bavarian Highlands are specially well adapted. The natives of that mountain region which stretches south-east of Munich are truly idiosyncratic. As yet the influence of modern progress has but set faint mark upon them; as yet the baneful influence that tourist intercourse has exercised upon their Swiss neighbours has not appeared among them; as yet the stranger is treated with trusting kindness, and not regarded as a natural prey. A very individual people are these Highlanders of Bavaria—sturdy, strong, independent, and open-hearted, like to their pines, their mountains, their rapid, crystal-clear, and rushing upland streams. Now in these days of steam, when trains have invaded even the fastnesses of the high Alps, and the shrill whistle of the locomotive is re-echoed by the dreary glacier, it becomes hard, and well-nigh impossible, for any land or people to retain its distinctive characteristics. The railway is a universal leveller of mankind, more potent and sure than laws or institutions. In view, therefore, of the changes that are so rapidly altering the aspect of Europe, we are doubly grateful to the artist who, by pen or pencil, preserves for us those characteristics, now, alas! fast vanishing. This it is that the new Slade Professor has elected to do for the people among whom stood his cradle, and the first instalment of studies it is his intention to continue are on view for the London public to-day.

As we all know, when Mr. Herkomer first appeared as painter before the public, he showed that the influence of Fred Walker, with his love for out-door effects and simple *terre à terre* idyls, was strong upon him. Of late years this tendency has seemed to

give way to a sterner, grimmer treatment of his own, but in the present cycle he has returned to the Fred Walkerism of his youth, with a touch here and there of the idealism, the pastoral loveliness of George Mason's rustic idyls. It is this method of dealing with his themes that saves the general impression of this exhibition from being sad, for the people depicted lead as a rule laborious lives into which little gaiety and less variety enter.

To prevent misconception, it may be well to state at the outset that the Bavarian Highlander must not be confounded with the uncouth, coarse Lowlander, whose rudeness is proverbial throughout Germany. Nor must they be confused with the Tyrolese, though their lands are contiguous. The Bavarian Highlander has none of the Southern touch that marks the countrymen of Andreas Hofer. The Tyrolese lives in a land that brings forth the vine; the Bavarian is a beer drinker. Here at once springs into evidence a crucial difference. The Bavarian is slower-witted and more conservative; his faults and his virtues have suffered fewer changes since generations. Uprightness is the foundation of his character; it is rare to find him a thief or liar. Wherever brutal features show themselves, they are, without exception, the result of excessive drinking—a tendency unhappily on the increase during the last ten to fifteen years. But, even when not a tippler, he is apt with age to lose something of his native refinement. This is the result of extreme hard work; for to delve, sow, and fell is no easy task in these solemn mountain regions, where the natural difficulties to be overcome by man are rendered doubly laborious from the conditions of the soil and climate. Then, too, his life lacks intellectual stimulus. In early youth the love passions lend a spur to emotion, but when these, soon vanquished by the hard fight for bare existence, have flown away for ever, there remains only a sorry blank of uniform monotony. Tired out with heavy manual labour, books can offer him no attraction; and it is not uncommon to find among the middle-aged that the arts of reading and writing, learnt in youth, have been forgotten for want of exercise. And since they are without exception Catholics, and hence have their religion enacted for them, even the need to use a prayer book has not kept their learning oiled. This, their religion, is a most important factor in their lives, as Mr. Herkomer takes care to show us again and again in his pictures. Not only is it all they have to awaken and keep active in their minds higher thoughts, but it is their only source of recreation. For it must be borne in mind that the Catholic religion is a gay one; it nurtures and cherishes the sensuous emotions of its adherents; it encourages festivities; it is as remote as the poles from the Puritan standard of gloom and depression as accompaniments to religion. The chief amusements of this people are bound up with their Church life—as witness the Passion Play of Ober-Ammergau—and their creed still forms for them an important educational

element. It has taught them many things: for example, to be by no means indifferent to outward appearances. These peasants are fully alive to the beauty of the nature amid which they live—to the picturesqueness of a scene. Their intense love for their mountain home is not a matter of dull habit, but real and living. Thus, I remember well a woodman, in whose house I lodged many weeks, often getting up before dawn on Sunday mornings and ranging the high Alps solely for his own pleasure, returning with lovely flowers in time for my breakfast and his own attendance at high mass. Yet another thing that their religion inculcates is that respect for authority and their social superiors which is practised even by the youngest child. This respect is so delightful in its nature, because it is free from all servility, from all cringing; because it is compatible with the natural dignity of human intercourse and proper self-respect. No infant however small, no man however aged, passes a stranger without a greeting. The hand is kissed, the hat is raised, and that most touching and sweetest of salutations, peculiar to the mountains, falls from their lips: *Grüss Gott*. One of Mr. Herkomer's best pictures both for theme and treatment illustrates such a scene. It is called "Contrasts." Here we see an English lady and her daughter surrounded by the village school children, who have just come out at dinner time to eat the food they bring with them, and to enjoy an hour's recreation. This picture was sold before the private view day for £350.

Further, the religion of these peasants, because it is done for them, is ever present and around their lives, being active while they themselves are following the precept of St. Bernard, which tells us that *Laborare est orare*. While toiling in the fields, the midday or vesper bell will remind them that in the distant village prayers are uprising to the Maker of all, and a moment's pause will be made to raise the hat, to uplift the mind, in petition or blessing. Of this too Mr. Herkomer gives various touching illustrations; among others a group of children taught by their mother to say a passing prayer at the wayside shrine, and an aged woodcutter on his way to work passing a rude roadside shrine and going by it hat in hand. These wayside chapels are a feature in the landscape of the district, as well as the votive tablet that commemorates some miraculous escape, the memorial cross that narrates some grim disaster. If in Bavaria the people seem apt to associate sacred things with forms that revolt our eyes and shock our more cultured sense of beauty, this springs rather from imperfect artistic taste than from errors of feeling. And ghastly, repulsive, as the wayside Christ is apt to be, its uncompromising realism appeals more surely to these peasants than would a gentler treatment; the grotesque sculptures of purgatory and hell tortures say more to them than would the paintings and carvings of a Luini or a Donatello. In a gently humorous picture, called

"A Peep into Purgatory," Mr. Herkomer shows us a flaxen-haired, strapping peasant maiden gazing half awed and half amused at one of these comical, realistic representations of sacred things. Indeed the realism displayed is often startling, as witness here the beards and moustaches of the tormented. In these representations of purgatory women generally play a great part, their long flowing hair and uplifted arms being favourite artistic points. One wonders what the sculptor felt who carved such things. The most poetic little picture of all to my mind, a very German *Märchen* in miniature, is that named "God bless thy incomings and thy outgoings." It represents the house-door that plays a distinct part in the life of a Bavarian peasant. Here we see an aged dame letting herself in. On her arm is a basket full of fresh-cut field produce; cabbages and onions. She approaches the guardian of her home with a sort of reverence, for the door is regarded as a symbol of comfort and security. It is often inscribed with texts or blessings. Almost invariably also it bears three rude crosses, or the initials B., C., and M., both referring to the three wise men of the east, held in special reverence by the Catholic Church. Not uncommon either are specially printed house-door blessings, such as we see in this picture, in which a number of quaint verselets are written into a string of hearts. These, before they are attached to the door, are frequently blessed by the priest. There is a touch of genuine poetic feeling about this practice, which is not wholly superstitious in its application. If pressed to define their feeling with regard to it, we should find the blessings are placed from no idea that they will protect the inmates absolutely from all harm, but a notion that they will nevertheless do them good—that their presence gives an undefined sense of comfort; the result, no doubt, of old habit and precedence.

An idyl of the Walker school is the larger work called "For Next Year." Here we see how hard is the field labour in this country, the ploughing especially. It needs one man to guide the horse, another to push the implement behind, while in the rear walks a boy, who beats fine the big hard lumps of earth. The chief of the household does the sowing, which follows at once; so that while in one patch of the field they plough, in another they sow, and in a third cover the grain with the hoe.

Though amenable to authority, obedient and upright, there is one element in the nature of this people that no authority can conquer, and this is the poaching spirit. In temperaments that possess it innately—and what Highlander does not?—it masters its owner. Were it not that the game laws are stringent, the forests watched and warded by Government, in the one case the love of sport, in the other thoughtless improvidence, would have denuded these Alps of deer and timber long ago. Poachers are common figures, the feuds between them and the privileged hunters

and Government keepers constant. This love of hunting is indeed their strongest passion. All Mr. Herkomer's dramatic power is shown in "The Dead Poacher's Father." Here we see the one element of revolt against authority breaking forth. The laws of the Bavarian Highlands are so arranged that a Government hunter may shoot a poacher if he finds him, and *if he shoots him from the front*; but whenever this occurs, as it frequently does, the hunter is usually quickly transferred in office to another district, in order that he may escape the village vengeance. In this picture a father sees the man who has shot his son pass the village tavern. The sight sends a shock of rage and fury through his stiff old frame, causing him to rise from his seat, his body rigid with anger. The more sober minds, who know that his wrath is futile, try to calm him. The work forms a sort of pendant to the artist's academy picture of 1884, entitled "Natural Enemies." But the legitimate hunter, as well as the poacher, plays a great rôle in the mountain life. The hunter is only allowed to shoot certain animals, and at certain times. He brings his booty home to the village in a small hand-cart. Very pathetic is the expression of the poor beast thus involuntarily brought "amid the haunts of men," as we see in the picture of that name. The sportsman, who has a great sense of the importance of the occasion, and of the beauty of the animal, always takes care to pose it in such a manner that the head shows and looks well. Often they will decorate a beast with green boughs, or put a twig within his mouth. It often happens that the hunter who has shot the animal cannot leave his post to bring his booty down into the valley. It is then given over to another man, who brings it home without those honours that alone are the right of the successful shot. This we see in "Carting Home a Stag."

A chamois hunter, of whom our painter gives a spirited representation, has often to carry the whole chamois upon his back, as in this picture, until he gets to a lower spot where he can find a cart. Their method of tying up the beast is quite scientific. They slit the sinews of the foot where these are strongest, slip through them the cords that bind up the animal, then hook the horns into these also in such a manner as to keep the head erect, to prevent it from beating against the bearer, which would be bad for beast and man.

Brilliant in treatment and full of out-door effects is "Learning his Craft," in which we see a youth beating thin his scythe, it being a peculiarity of the German scythe that the metal is beaten thin with the hammer in lieu of being ground. The metal of a plate thus thinned becomes very tough. It is easily sharpened with a whetting stone, and cuts as fine as a razor. The stick is straight, and consequently the tool is very light and easily managed. In the Peasants' Wars of Germany these scythes, hammered straight on the stick and forming a rough pike, have

played a great and deadly part. A fresh morning idyl, too, is "The Mowers," three young women deftly swinging their scythes through the tall luscious grass. For in Bavaria, as indeed throughout Germany, women do the hardest field labour. In mowing they take a leading part, manipulating their scythes with a grace and ease that prove them adepts.

Most strange to eyes that have never witnessed the spectacle is the picture of "Cows coming down from the Alm." The alm are those fields of rich pastures, springing moss, and Alpine flowers which, in all the higher mountain regions, separate the snow-line, the barren, desolate labyrinth of rocks, from the zone of pines and deciduous trees. Up hither the cattle are driven early in June, the herdswomen accompanying them; and up here in rude huts, usually pitched at great distances from one another, the flocks are fed and tended, butter and cheese made and stored, until the first frosts send the inmates back down into the village, where, if their alm life has been successful, their entry is an occasion of festive triumph. The herdswomen lead in their flocks, gaily decorated with garlands of flowers, coloured bits of paper, old feathers, or whatever else of gaudy finery lies to hand. The choicest cattle often have their faces enveloped in a mask made of gold cloth, and it is curious to note that the cows seem to understand that this is a distinction, and carry themselves with some pride when thus bedizened.

Up in the alm, separated for months from wider intercourse, the men and women lead a life of primitive simplicity that has joys, sorrows, and pleasures all its own, and which has furnished material to several German writers of peasant tales. It is a most important feature in the existence of the younger. Indeed, to find the genuine peasant mirth, it is growing almost needful to climb up to the alm. In the valleys it is dying fast. Poverty is killing it, combined with the military service that drains away the younger men, making it harder for the rising generation to find legitimate amusement.

Of the woods we see a dark, rich picture. The forest is sung and loved by these Highlanders; in it—its vastness, its mystery, its beauty—is felt and seen the key-note to the romance of the Alps. Here the woodcutters and charcoal-burners spend their whole week. We see a group of these in "Woodcutters," as at the end of the week they return to their village homes in order to spend the Sunday among their friends. They bring with them their irons, hatchets, saws, water-tubs, and the curious sleighs on which they carry the wood they fell. Gems of luminous colour are "Breaking Flax" and "The Last Load." In the latter is seen a man bearing on his head some of the hay that is often obtained by the peasants from steep slopes, where they can bring no horse or cart. In that case they carry it down in bags, or four-cornered cloths knotted together as in this picture. In the former are

beheld girls in an open courtyard breaking the flax with wooden flails. Flax takes a leading place among the crops of the Bavarian Highlanders, since to this day they spin all their own stuffs. The flax, after it is gathered, is roasted in a hot oven, then broken, then raked to make it fluffy. All these operations must be got through before the winter months, that are employed in the spinning of the thread. It should be noted, in passing, that though these people are in most cases proprietors of their land, in return for all their severe labour, their infinite trouble, their acres can keep them at most for three or four months of the year. The rest has to be made up by the sale of cattle, and even so it is a weary struggle to make both ends meet. In this respect matters have retrogressed. The people are poorer than they were; or, rather, they have learnt to demand more from life than it can give them. For these enlarged views the compulsory military service, introduced by the Prussian rule, is answerable. It takes the men from their homes, it shows them a wider, larger life, and returns them restless and discontented. Of such a discontented peasant there is an excellent sketch in the exhibition. Fine objects truly are these men in their pretty and sensible costume, bronzed, weather-beaten in hue. The male population, as a rule, are stronger in character, and better looking, than the women. Up to 25 they, too, are frequently handsome of mien, but since they share with the beasts the heaviest burdens of life, they age rapidly and coarsen in feature.

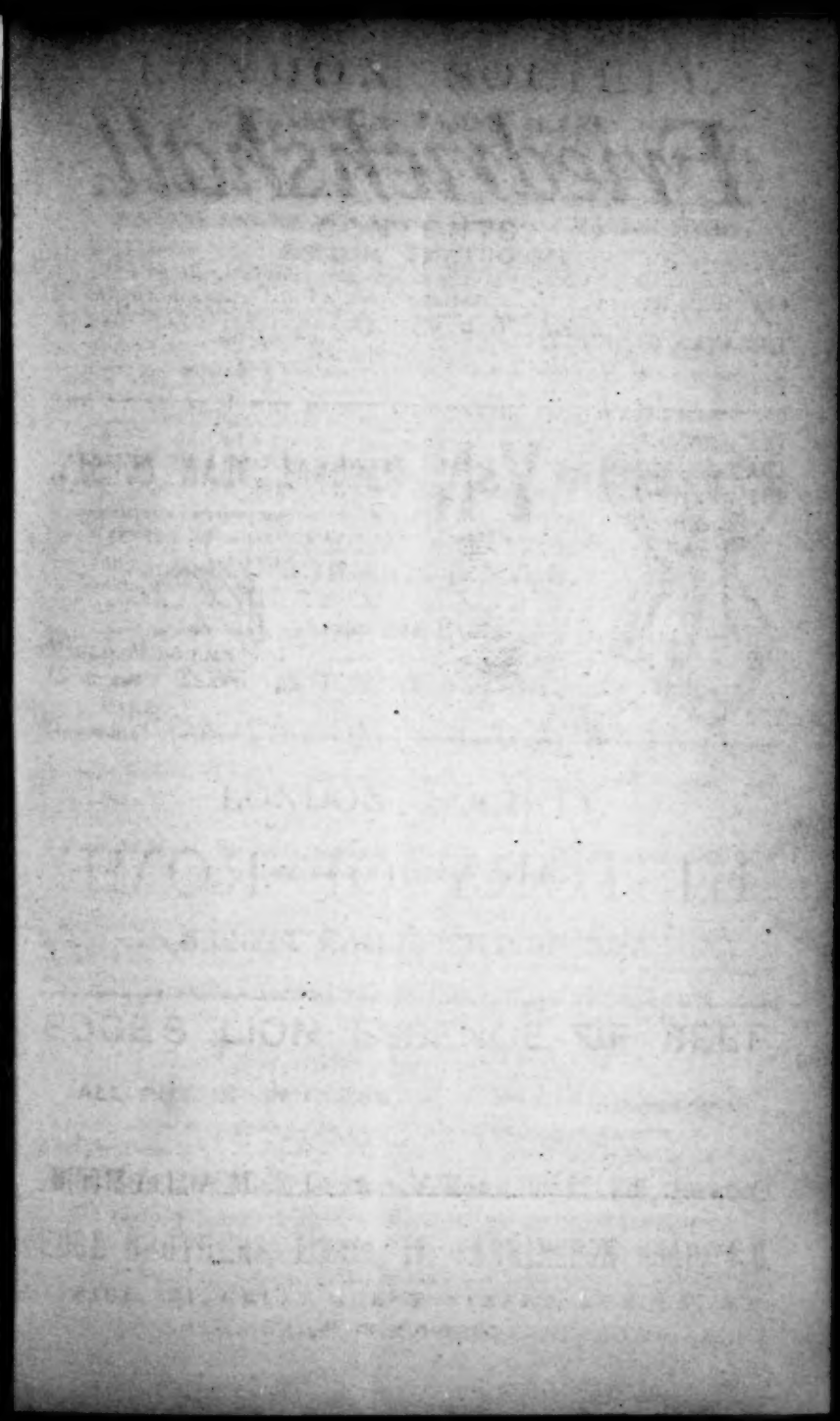
In short, an excellent ethnographical study, as well as a great pictorial treat, is afforded by these pictures, which combine facility of invention with innate perception of individual character and scenic characteristics. Defects of drawing are here and there to be noticed, but these are mostly redeemed by the general sentiment of the theme and treatment, by its note of truth, and by the excellent out-door and atmospheric effects which may of themselves have necessitated some rapidity of handling to catch them in their evanescence.

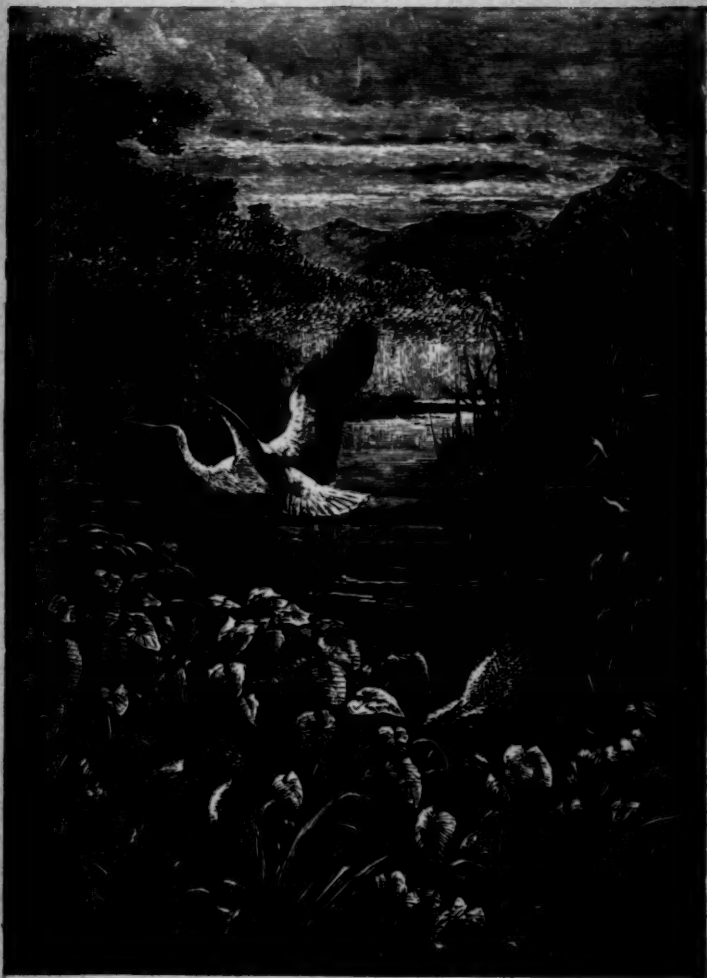
Once more we would express our thanks to Mr. Herkomer that he has thus preserved for us the characteristics of his Highland compatriots—characteristics vanishing even among this most conservative of peoples. To those unable to visit Bavaria's Alps themselves, such an exhibition furnishes a true and comprehensive picture of life and scenery.

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BAFFLED!

From a Drawing by H. WILMERIS.